

Conservatives do say yes to smoking bans

By Representative Thom Tillis, NC House of Representatives

I have a great deal of respect for Reverend Creech and his work with the Christian Action League, but his OP-ED in Saturday's Observer "Conservatives say yes to ban" is misleading and factually incorrect. Reverend Creech should know that conservative republicans and democrats say "yes" to smoking bans when they avoid unfair and unintended consequences.

The editorial asserts "Utah and Arizona, ranked among the nation's top 10 Republican states, both approved statewide smoking bans with no exemptions." This is simply wrong. Utah and Arizona enacted smoking ban legislation that includes several exemptions that are virtually identical to the exemptions republicans and democrats are seeking in North Carolina.

In fact, most smoking ban legislation passed in other states contains exceptions and they've still received high marks from the American Lung Association for smoke-free legislation. Notably, both Arizona and Utah received "A" ratings in the American Lung Association's publication "State of Tobacco Control: 2008."

Reverend Creech cites the results of a poll conducted by Elon University but the poll did not seek opinions regarding exceptions to the smoking ban. While 67% of those surveyed by Elon said they favored a smoking ban, the Elon poll did not seek opinions as to the scope of the ban. I have conducted an unscientific internet survey of nearly 460 people, and I found a number similar to the Elon poll (69%) support a smoking ban. However, when respondents are asked if they think exceptions should be made, nearly 60% said some exceptions make sense.

Appeals to find common ground on this issue with "liberals and moderates" portrays Republicans as insensitive to the public health issues and as unwilling to say "yes" to a smoking ban. This is patently incorrect. The call for "common ground" in this case seems to be to simply have legislators embrace the legislation as proposed in spite of the unfair and unintended consequences. Common ground should be based on recognition by the bill sponsors that certain exceptions should be made.

It seems to me the sponsors of HB 2 are out of step with best practices in other states and with many citizens in North Carolina. With just a few simple amendments, we could produce legislation that is consistent with what many North Carolinians believe is reasonable. In fact, adopting exceptions consistent with the grade-A legislation passed by republican legislatures in Arizona and Utah would be an excellent start.

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NOTES:

[To view Arizona's lists of smoking ban exemptions, CLICK this link](#)

[To view Utah's list of smoking ban exemptions, CLICK this link](#)

[To view the results of the smoking ban survey sponsored by Rep. Thom Tillis, CLICK this link](#)

[To view "report cards" for states regarding smoke-free legislation by the American Lung Association, CLICK this link](#)