

## **Nixa Bans Smoking in Restaurants, Other Sites**

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By Chad Hunter

Nixa — With a 5-1 vote, Nixa leaders on Monday passed a smoking ban on "every recreation spot" in the city.

The ban, a year and a half in the making, originally targeted restaurants, but aldermen toughened it to include pool halls, bingo parlors and bowling alleys. The city already has a law prohibiting smoking in most commercial establishments like grocery stores, banks and offices.

"This will be a blanket ban," said Alderman Mark Loge, who made the amendment to cut all exceptions. "This encompasses every recreation spot."

City officials said a 2006 survey showed residents were in favor of the ban 3-1.

"Personally, I've never been for the smoking ban," Alderman Brian Hayes said. "But I represent a ward that is positively for it."

...Some restaurant owners oppose the smoking ban. They claim the ban will drive customers to nearby restaurants in the county where smoking is legal.

"I do know that my business will disappear," said David Bauer, owner of Coyote's Nixa Grille, which Bauer said has finally turned a profit after three years. "Customers can go down the road a half mile."

Longhorn Grill owner Omar Barron also asked the city to reconsider the ban.

"It's easy for people who don't have a business or haven't invested hundreds of thousands of dollars to have an opinion," Barron said. "Are you going to ban tanning beds next? It's over-governing."

But the ban also has its share of supporters, including the American Cancer Society.

"It's common knowledge that smoking is bad for you, and so is secondhand smoke," said Cancer Society spokeswoman Lane Teters. "There is plenty of evidence that smoking bans have not affected businesses. The only negative effects there could be is against the tobacco companies."

Patrick Wilson of Nixa said time away from the area broadened his view on smoking.

"I grew up here around Springfield, and I've lived in California where there's no smoking indoors," Wilson said. "I think it's a good trend."

"Thirty years ago, we were smoking on airplanes. We would be smoking in the room here," he said.