

The Montclair Times (NorthJersey.com)

Following Montclair: State Legislature passes smoking ban

JULY 6, 2014 LAST UPDATED: SUNDAY, JULY 6, 2014, 1:32 PM

BY ANDREW SEGEDIN STAFF WRITER THE MONTCLAIR TIMES

Just months after Montclair banned smoking from public parks and outside certain municipal facilities, New Jersey is one step away from enforcing a similar ban on all local, county and state parks and beaches.

Last Thursday, June 26, the state Senate approved a bill to ban smoking in public recreational spaces. The state General Assembly, too, approved the bill, which now awaits Gov. Chris Christie's signature.

"I'm very excited that we did go that way," said 4th Ward Township Councilwoman Renée Baskerville, who was the driving force behind Montclair's ban. "We had some idea that [legislators] were going to discuss it. I was trying, very much, to be ahead of theirs. We wanted them to know that we were on board."

The bill, according to Global Advisors on Smokefree Policy [GASP] New Jersey Director Karen Blumenfeld, would make 100 percent of all state parks and beaches smoke-free. Counties and municipalities with public beaches, she said, would have the opportunity through ordinances to permit smoking on 15 percent of their beaches.

Wildlife refuges, reservoirs and golf courses are exempt from the bill, according to Blumenfeld. However, the bill, which amends the NJ Smokefree Air Act, empowers local governments to make their

own smoking restrictions in such areas.

Prior to the state Legislature's decision, Blumenfeld said, there was growing support for smoke-free recreational spaces throughout the state. Two hundred and forty New Jersey municipalities have imposed smoking restrictions in recreational areas, according to Blumenfeld, with 42 percent of those restrictions having been approved in the past two years.

What's next?

GASP NJ will continue its focus on educating the public on living tobacco-free lives, the health hazards of electronic smoking devices and smoke-free housing and tobacco control initiatives, according to Blumenfeld, who said that, should Christie sign the bill into law, GASP NJ will likely provide technical assistance to out-of-state partners looking to have similar laws enacted in their states.

In Montclair, Baskerville said, she would be interested in banning smoking outside the town's three firehouses and six train stations. Cognizant that some employees, commuters and residents still smoke, Baskerville said that she'd be open to having restricted smoking areas at these locations as a step-down measure.

Ultimately, Baskerville said she would like people driving into the township to be greeted with signs proclaiming Montclair to be a smoke-free community.

Contact Andrew Segedin at segedin@northjersey.com

<http://www.northjersey.com/news/state-follows-montclair-s-smoking-ban-1.1046983>