

## **Editorial: Gov. Christie's veto of smoking ban for N.J. parks, beaches just plain stinks**

By [Times of Trenton Editorial Board](#) on September 22, 2014 at 11:56 AM, updated September 22, 2014 at 12:18 PM

We seriously doubt anyone goes to New Jersey's shore to enjoy the beauty of the discarded cigarette butts decorating many of our vaunted beaches.

Gov. Chris Christie had the chance to rid the shore of those nasty bits of detritus earlier this month and he blew it big time.

**His veto of a bill that would have banned smoking in public parks and limited smoking on beaches** is a stick in the eye to environmentalists and anti-smoking advocates, and to the lawmakers on both sides of the aisle in both houses of the state Legislature who overwhelmingly endorsed the measure.

The bill would have fined violators \$250 for the first offense, \$500 for the second and \$1,000 for additional offenses – not unreasonable penalties for fouling our environment, endangering our wildlife and subjecting our humans to the dangers of second-hand smoke.

But the governor mocked the bill as a “prescriptive, one-size-fits-all” ban, favoring instead a localized approach that would leave the decision-making to the individual towns or counties.

New Jersey, with its 565 municipalities and 21 counties, needs a uniform policy that will benefit all of its residents, whether they're visiting Allaire State Park in Wall or Wawayanda State Park in Vernon Township.

Imagine an alternate history, one in which the governor ignored the demands of the tobacco industry, put aside his attempts to build a conservative voter base for his likely 2016 presidential run, and instead considered the needs of his constituents.

In this scenario, the ban stands. The 85 percent of New Jersey residents who don't smoke are no longer being held hostage to the 15 percent who do. Rangers in parks at high risk for forest fires aren't terrified that a stray ash will ignite a

low-hanging branch. Parents are relieved that their children's blood vessels aren't being corroded by fumes as they build their sand castles.

GASP – Global Advisors on Smokefree Policy – is a 40-year-old nonprofit funded in part by the N.J. State Department of Health. In a chilling report issued in August, the organization documents the myriad health concerns related to outdoor second-hand smoke, which scientists say can equal indoor levels. Among them are elevated levels of lung cancer and heart disease.

We're tired of people treating New Jersey's beaches as their personal ashtray, and we don't need cast-off cigarettes clogging our ponds and streams. If ever a veto demanded a legislative override, this one is it.

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