



To: Members of the North Carolina General Assembly  
From: The North Carolina Restaurant and Lodging Association  
Subject: Impact of Smoking Ban on Business  
Date: October 5, 2012

The North Carolina Restaurant and Lodging Association is the voice of the 17,000 restaurants that operate within the state. North Carolina restaurants employ 401,700 people, representing roughly 10% of the state's workforce. As a whole, our industry has been very pleased with the impacts of the General Assembly's statewide smoking ban, both in terms of its effect on restaurant revenue as well as with the fairness with which the law has been applied.

The smoking ban has had a positive impact on restaurant sales in North Carolina since its implementation. While some of our members were concerned initially about the impact on their business, most now report sales have increased after the ban went into effect. One operator, for example, reported that his sales went down in the month following the ban's effective date, but bounced back to pre-ban levels the next month and have since grown 25-30% over 2009 levels.

The hospitality industry has been very pleased with the level playing field created by the law. Half of North Carolina's 17,000 restaurants serve beer, wine or alcohol to their patrons. Many offer entertainment at night and on weekends. Our restaurant members have accommodated their smoking customers by providing decks, porches, and patios. Others provide an outside smoking area where patrons can smoke and then return to enjoy their food or the entertainment. There is no reason that the significantly smaller number of bars and private clubs that also serve food and alcohol or provide entertainment cannot do the same.

Not only has the smoking ban been well received by our industry, it also appears to be immensely popular with the public as a whole. A recent independent, third-party study performed by Public Opinion Strategies found that 71% of voters think the ban passed on smoking in bars and restaurants three years ago has been a good thing for the state compared to only 19% who think it's been a bad thing. Democrats (75/15), Republicans (66/22) and Independents (70/21) all think it's been a positive decision for the state.

The smoking ban has been met with overwhelming popularity from our industry, the majority of North Carolina residents and even the state's courts. The complaints of one small group should not be enough to undo a law that has been so well received otherwise. Our Association supports the smoking ban as written and respectfully requests that it remain intact, as the economic vitality of our industry depends on it. It is very important to provide a level playing field for similar establishments and not single out competing groups for loopholes or special exemptions. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Alyssa Barkley, IOM  
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NCRLA Board Chair

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cc: Frank Gray and Whitney Christensen, NCRLA Lobbyists

"Protecting, promoting, informing and improving North Carolina's \$17 billion restaurant and lodging industry."  
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