

Everyone deserves the right to breathe clean air and nothing says that louder or clearer than Louisiana's "Smoke-Free Air Act." On January 1, 2007, our state took a giant leap in the right direction, but we must not think that the buck stops there.

Being a strong advocate for the rights of an individual, it is my conviction that government should not overly dictate how a person chooses to live their life. This may lead some to ask how then - can I agree with such a regulation.

In my mind, that answer is clear – smoking may be a personal choice, but secondhand smoke is a personal health risk that is placed upon the shoulders of us all. It is a risk that surrounds almost every facet of our society, so much so that we often don't even notice it. Take a minute to look around while at your workplace, your favorite eatery, theatre, school campus, church or even your local healthcare facility and notice how we are inundated with tobacco users and the secondhand smoke that follows.

Now that Louisiana has undertaken a course of action to curb indoor smoking, we must now begin the process of moving a few steps further on a personal level. In the past, I've always encouraged my friends and family who smoke to please quit; I know it's not easy to do, but when you care about someone, you only want what's best for them. I not only support a smoke-free indoor atmosphere, but the continued pursuit for readily available assistance given to citizens wishing to break the habit.

Over the next few months, show some concern for your neighbor, coworker, fellow student or family member and offer a helping hand. Tell them that you understand how difficult it is to quit, but that help is close by. Through a small amount of research, you can discover numerous smoke-free support systems that offer aid to the addicted smoker. Our state is doing what it can to protect her citizens from unnecessary health hazards, now you can do your share.

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