

NEW JERSEY SMOKING BANS ON THE RISE

More than 25% of New Jersey's municipalities have passed outdoor smoking bans with little to no opposition.

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WOODLAND PARK - Dozens of New Jersey towns and cities, "more than 25% of the state's municipalities" have passed smoking bans in outdoor public areas against minimal public opposition, NorthJersey.com reports.

The proliferation of bans reflects a shift in public opinion, which are now embraced as necessary public health measures.

"You can no longer deny the effects from secondhand smoke and, for that reason, I think smokers are more respectful of those around them," said Mayor Richard LaBarbiera of Paramus, where the council banned smoking in recreation areas last year without any opposition.

Paramus is one of 160 municipalities and 12 counties in New Jersey that restrict smoking in outdoor public areas, according to Global Advisors on Smokefree Policy (GASP).

GASP is now working with two dozen additional cities and towns that are considering similar measures, said Executive Director Karen Blumenfeld, who said anti-smoking laws are being adopted or expanded at the rate of roughly one town per week.

"More people are becoming aware of the health benefits of smoke-free parks," Blumenfeld said.

The smoking ban increase has coincided with a decline in smoking. Fines range from \$50 to \$2,000, depending on the number of previous offenses.

Blumenfeld said she hopes legislators will pass a statewide smoking ban for public recreation areas that will create uniformity in the state's 565 municipalities.

"We've seen more and more towns and counties pass smoke-free policies," she said, "and we hope the state will take it as a sign."

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