



Everything Jersey

Bill to ban lighting up in cars with kids isn't just blowing smoke

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By **Star-Ledger Editorial Board**

Instead of smoking in a car with your kid in the backseat, why not just hand junior an aerosol can and say, "huff"?

You're already placing a pair of developing lungs into a chamber of poisonous gases. Several states have sought to snuff out this practice, passing laws that ban smoking with a child in the car. California sets the bar at 18 and under, and Arkansas, Louisiana and Maine have similar laws, though they differ on the age cut-off.

New Jersey is considering a bill that would ban smoking in cars with children under 16 years old, with a potential fine of \$100. Hopefully, it won't flop like South Carolina's recent bill, which would have fined drivers \$25 for lighting up with a child age 6 or under in the car, but didn't get enough support — legislators argued it's an overreach.

Yet if driver can't talk on cell phones, drink alcohol or opt out on a seat belt, what's wrong with banning smoking with kids in the car? The measure has strong public support: a July 2010 study found that 60 percent of smokers in the United States are in favor of banning smoking in cars with children.

Harvard researchers found "alarming" levels of secondhand smoke were generated in just five minutes in cars under various driving conditions. It didn't matter if the windows were down: the air pollution was even higher than in similar studies of smoky bars — including heightened levels of carbon monoxide.

Instead of worrying about an adult's right to light up while driving, let's protect the kids in the backseat.

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