

County officials' smoking ban borrows page from big brother

On a 5-2 vote, with Commissioners Pat Quain and Jeff Bohm voting no, St. Clair County is moving forward with plans to ban smoking at all indoor, public and private, workplace and places of public accommodations - except restaurants, bars and specialty tobacco stores.

If nothing else, common sense tells us that sucking tobacco smoke, with its entire chemical byproducts, into your body day in and day out is pretty self-destructive .

That, however, is not the real issue. If someone wants to smoke himself or herself into an early grave, that's up to him or her. It's "secondhand smoke" that gives the anti-smoking, born-again crowd the opening to play big brother to all of us.

Being anti-smoking has become a "cause celebre." Nothing like a little socialist big brotherism to make a politician's day, is there?

If smoking and secondhand smoke is such a serious health and social problem here in St. Clair County, why wouldn't they ban smoking in bars and restaurants in the county, too? Is their secondhand smoke less dangerous?

f they need to change the state laws to include bars and restaurants, then why aren't they pushing our state officials to do so? Better yet, why not ban the use and sale of cigarettes and cigars in all of St. Clair County? Just put an end to its use. That's no different than the legal ban on marijuana.

Just think: The commissioners could move on to protecting us from other self destructive activities like alcohol or "secondhand food" like the fast food we force our children to eat as we eat those great fries.

How about all of the men and women working in environmentally dangerous plants and factories here in St. Clair County? How about all of the children who live around them?

I've got to tell you what really irks me: All of those proprietors who want the county to step in and ban smoking in their facilities because they do not have the guts to tell their customers not to smoke. Aren't these the same business people who are always complaining about government's endless rules and regulations?

And remember this, all of you business owners out there: This make-work project is being pushed by the St. Clair County Health Department, which

now will have a reason to enter every building in the county, including your business, to police this law.

While health department officials are there, maybe they will check out your business for other health and environmental issues. It certainly kicks open that door, doesn't it?

Since the county always is crying poor, there most certainly will be fines and annual inspection fees established. Every business in the county - what a great fund-raiser! Is that what this really is about?

It does make you wonder why the health department wants to control every business in St. Clair County, but not a word out of them to protect your children from the health damage our children will experience from the new Blue Water Bridge Plaza.

The state collects in excess of \$1 billion a year in tobacco taxes. The county commissioners will never break their addiction to tobacco tax money passed down to them by the state. They would rather have you and your children impacted by cigarettes and secondhand smoke than ban it completely and give up their blood money.

Hey, Big Brother: Isn't it time to leave smokers alone? Isn't it time to quit being hypocrites?