



## Smoking out socialist smack on cigarettes

By Jim Waters

Kentucky's smoking nannies have made it clear: They want a state-government imposed and enforced smoking ban in every public place in the commonwealth – even in local communities that have decided otherwise.

We must stop them.

They brush aside as insignificant — or worse, ignore altogether — the right of local governments to make smoking policies that best fit their communities, especially if those decisions result in a partial ban rather than a total one.

For example, the state's Chief Smoking Nanny, Ellen Hahn, who directs the University of Kentucky Center for Smoke Free Policy, recently issued her call for a statewide ban while in Bowling Green to speak to the Rotary Club.

“I think it would be really wonderful if the state would pass it,” Hahn told Dan Modlin, news director for Western Kentucky University's public radio affiliate, who covered the speech. “However, let me just say — it has got to be totally comprehensive, meaning that all work places would be covered.”

Then to my amazement, she added: “It has to have anti-pre-emptive language, meaning that local governments could do more if they wanted to.”

Look out. The nannies think those governments not satisfied with simply trampling on the private-property rights of business owners should be able to tell you what you can – or cannot – do in your personal living space.

Perhaps they could force apartment-building owners to ban smoking in their units, or send armed troops to arrest parents who smoke at home around children.

Not only that, Hahn wants to spend “millions” on a statewide ban. Making a comment like that during an economic downturn makes me wonder what she's been smoking.

By pushing for a statewide ban while in Bowling Green, Hahn thumbed her nose at the city commission, which voted 3-2 against a comprehensive smoking ban in August 2007.

Instead, commissioners agreed to ban smoking in publicly owned places – such as courthouses and parks. It was a reasonable – and constitutionally acceptable – compromise. And based on the most recent election results, the community seems satisfied.

Hahn's proposal indicates that nannies have very little interest in finding acceptable compromises. They would not hesitate to waste all effort by local governments that have already done their own wrestling on this issue.

The same thing happened in Hopkins County, which fought through much controversy and reached a decision recently that all sides accepted. It bans smoking in public places where those under age 18 are allowed.

This agreement resulted from nearly a yearlong fight, during which county lawmakers tried to evade responsibility by passing it to nannies in the county's health department. Residents who fought the ban believe bureaucrats in Frankfort were pushing the locals to bypass elected officials and trample on the rights of private-property owners in the name of protecting people's health. Look for them to try and do the same thing in other communities.

But after this column called attention to the magistrates' all-out attempt to avoid making tough decisions, they worked with local residents and reached a compromise. Hahn's proposal would undo that and cheapens efforts already put forth by local residents to solve the issue.

Does this sound like the society our founders intended?

How often do the smoking statisticians offer even the slightest hint that they *care* about protecting personal-property rights or about the Constitution and the liberty, freedom and personal responsibility it advances?

Instead, we hear a barrage of ideas — delivered with all the enthusiasm that true-blue socialists can muster — intended to further expand the interference of government into our daily lives.

Because of this, it's time to do what my friend — and now registered Independent — Gatewood Galbraith said every generation must do: "Re-win its own freedom."

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