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Another Ill. city votes to adopt no-smoking rule

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BY ASSOCIATED PRESS

Champaign has joined the growing list of Illinois cities that have banned smoking in bars and restaurants.

The city council approved a no-smoking ordinance on a 5-to-4 vote late Tuesday night after hearing from more than three dozen people during the public comment portion of its meeting. The ordinance takes effect Aug. 1.

Tavern owner Jim Cross told the council that restaurants and bars in Champaign generate \$4.5 million annually in city sales taxes.

"This revenue stream will certainly be affected by this ordinance," he said. "Our livelihoods and those of over 1,000 employees will be affected. The smoker will drive farther to smoke outside of our boundaries."

But supporters of the ban countered that business might improve at restaurants and bars without smoke in the air.

"This is a great day," Scott Hays, president of the Champaign-Urbana Smokefree Alliance, told The (Champaign) News-Gazette. "I think the Champaign community is going to love the smoke-free bars and restaurants."

The ordinance, which allows an exception for outdoor dining patios, passed after one council member changed his position from an earlier straw vote on the issue.

Councilman Ken Pirok had previously supported banning smoking only in restaurants, but said last night that arguments against banning smoking in bars as well were "not very compelling."

"This is not about the rights of business owners and smokers, this is about the rights of nonsmokers," he said. "When you think about it in those terms, the smoking ban makes sense."

The city council in neighboring Urbana is also considering banning smoking in bars and restaurants, and a vote is expected next month.

The Champaign City Council joins governmental bodies in more than a dozen other Illinois cities--including Bloomington, Normal, Springfield and Chicago--that have voted to ban smoking in restaurants and bars.

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