

Apartment and Community Smoking Bans Debated



Owners of some apartment buildings are making new rules that prevent people from smoking in their apartments. The apartment owners say the new rules will protect people from smoke that drifts under doors, through cracks, and through heat and air conditioning vents. "People in apartment buildings share walls and ceilings -- and air," they say. "Apartment residents have the right to breathe clean air."

Banning smoking in apartments could save building owners money too. Landlords say it can cost thousands of dollars to clean carpets and paint apartments where smokers have lived. Going smoke-free can lower the risk of fire and reduce insurance costs too.

"Many people are willing to pay more to live in an apartment building that is smoke-free," added one building owner.

In many communities, some apartment buildings are smoke-free while others are not. But one community in California has taken the smoking ban a step farther. In Belmont, California, smoking is against the law in any apartment that shares a floor or ceiling with another apartment. People who break the law might face a \$100 fine.

Some people think smoking bans and the Belmont law have gone too far. "The government should focus on improving our schools and fighting crime instead of sticking their nose into our homes," they say.

It's one thing to ban smoking in *some* apartments, people say. Smokers in those buildings can find another place to live. But banning smoking in *all* apartments in a community is not right, they add. Even many non-smokers agree. "If they ban smoking in all apartments, then it won't be long before they take away other freedoms."

HISTORY OF SMOKING BANS

- Airlines and hospitals were among the first to ban smoking.
- Next, cigarettes, cigars, and pipes were banned from most offices.
- Since then, many states have banned tobacco use in bars and restaurants.

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THINK ABOUT THE NEWS

Do you think smoking bans are a good idea, a bad idea, or not needed? Tell why you feel the way you do.