

INDIANAPOLIS | State Rep. Charlie Brown, D-Gary, knows that winning committee approval for a statewide indoor smoking ban, with an exemption for nearly all casino property, is just the beginning.

"It's going to be a fight on the floor," Brown said.

The House Public Health Committee voted 9-3 Wednesday to send House

Bill 1018 to the full Republican-controlled House. Brown said he expects lawmakers will try to exempt more places from the smoking ban, including bars, private clubs and veterans halls.

The Gary representative said he isn't sure he'll be able to stop all of the possible exemptions, but "I'm going to try very hard," he said.

The smoking ban would prohibit smoking inside public places, workplaces, state-owned vehicles and within 12 feet of the door to a public place. Violators would be subject to a \$1,000 fine for a first offense and up to a \$10,000 fine for a third offense.

Among region lawmakers on the committee, Brown voted for the smoking ban, while state Rep. Don Lehe, R-Brookston, whose district includes south Lake and Newton counties, voted no.

The committee agreed to exempt casinos from the smoking ban after an analysis by the nonpartisan Legislative Services Agency found Indiana could lose up to \$194 million a year in casino wagering and admission taxes if smoking were banned in casinos.

The casino exemption includes any structure owned or leased by an Indiana casino that is on or adjacent to the casino site. Smoking also would be allowed at horse racing tracks and their satellite facilities, inside casinos at horse tracks and at retail tobacco shops.

Written by Administrator

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According to the legislation, smoking would be prohibited inside casinos in hallways, elevators or any room that is regularly used by children younger than 18.

If the smoking ban is approved by the House, Senate President David Long, R-Fort Wayne, has said he will give the legislation a Senate committee hearing. On four prior occasions, Long has refused to allow the Senate to consider House-approved smoking bans.

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