

Casino Workers Campaign

Op-Ed/Commentary - Idea/Template

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Risking our health at work so others can smoke is wrong!

(Create your OWN headline: example, "Secondhand smoke at my workplace is making me sick")

In the casino where I work, gamblers lose money. It's a risk they choose to take, and I guess somebody walks out a winner every now and then.

Of course, I don't lose money making drinks at the casino's bar, but I do lose a little more of my health every day because I have to breathe in so much secondhand smoke. And I can tell you that I *never* walk out a winner.

Unlike the folks gambling their money, I don't have the choice of walking away when I get sick of losing my health. I have to stay there till the end of my shift, no matter how sick I get.

I suppose some people will say I do have a choice: I could choose to get another job. But most people know that's not so easy these days.

Besides, why should I have to pick between my job and my health? Shouldn't I be allowed to work to pay my bills without having to breathe air I know is going to kill me?

I choose not to smoke because I don't want to get sick. I don't want to get lung cancer or emphysema and end up breathing through a hole in my throat. I don't deserve it, and my family doesn't deserve to have to deal with it.

But with the amount of secondhand smoke I breathe in at work, my doctor says I might as well be smoking a couple of packs a week. After six years working in the casino, an X-ray of my lungs looks about the same as a smoker's.

Last year, lawmakers banned smoking in restaurants and bars and pretty much everywhere except casinos. But at the same time, they exempted casinos, and that let me know they don't think my health is as important as everyone else's.

I know the government understands how dangerous secondhand smoke is, because they had to work pretty hard to get the smoking ban through. They got a lot of pushback from bar and restaurant owners, but they stood up to all that pressure and did the right thing to protect people's health.

Except they didn't stand up to the casinos.

They could still change that, though. They can vote to change the law so it includes casinos, so it protects all of us. They've already banned smoking casinos in Illinois and Colorado, and even next door in Delaware. Why not here too?

I have the same lungs and heart as the guys who serve drinks at the bar down the street or Ruby Tuesday or any other place. My body is just as badly affected by secondhand smoke as theirs, and I don't think my health is any less important than theirs just because I work in a casino.

Don't get me wrong: I'm glad my colleagues are protected from secondhand smoke in all those restaurants and bars. Nobody should be forced to breathe in all that poison – not even casino employees.

Name

Address

Contact number