

Mindy Rowland

From: pburns@humpys.com
Sent: Tuesday, April 08, 2014 10:20 AM
To: Sen. Bert Stedman; Sen. Peter Micciche; SEN.KEVIN.MEYER@AKLEG.COV; Sen. Pete Kelly;
Sen. Johnny Ellis
Subject: Smoking Ban Proposal
Attachments: Smoking ban legi.docx

Please push through the smoking ban....Whether or not people want to argue over if it is good or bad for businesses the ultimate goal is the health of Alaskans. We need your leadership on this.

Please read my attached letter and consider it

Regards,

Pete Burns
General Manager
"Head Dishwasher"
Humpy's Great Alaskan Alehouse
SubZero Bistro & Microlounge
Flattop Pizza + Pool
907-830-2995
pburns@humpys.com

610 W. 6th Ave

Anchorage, Ak 99501

907-830-2995

Esteemed Legislators,

I have thought long and hard about the proposal before you that concerns the banning of smoking within all places of work in the state of Alaska. In doing so I realized that my beliefs may be somewhat contrary to others in our industry. My perspective on the proposal is unique in the sense that I have seen the effects of second hand smoke as well as smoking related illnesses on families firsthand.

Hopefully my story doesn't bore you and you can stay with me to the end.....I was born in 1971, for 27 years of my adult life my father smoked cigarettes, sometimes 2 packs a day in the presence of all of our family including my two older brothers. During that time the effects of smoking weren't as known as they currently are. When I was 27 my father ceased smoking, he finally realized the damage that it was doing to him and those around him. To this day I believe that his intent was to hopefully somehow reverse the effects of his many years of smoking, even if just minimally, he wanted to improve his quality of life.

In September of 2002 I went to the doctor for a checkup complaining of numbness in my leg. I arrived at the office early in the morning, within 4 hours I had received an x-ray, cat scan, and MRI. After another additional hour I was finally called into the office by my Dr., the words that he uttered to me seemingly paralyzed me. Pete, I have bad news and worse news. Shocked I asked "What?". His response was " I believe you have cancer and we do not have the facilities here to treat you." Over the next 30 minutes he proceeded to show me images of growths in my body that had been located. He then stated that Alaska currently does not have an Orthopedic Oncologist which meant my treatment would have to take place somewhere else. As he proceeded to arrange treatments for me in Seattle at the Fred Hutchison Cancer Center and Seattle Cancer Care Alliance I composed myself for the hardest phone call that I had ever made at that point in my life. I remember attempting to compose myself prior to making the call, it was hard. I proceeded to get my parents on the phone. Upon stating to them that my doctor believed I had cancer my father uttered one phrase, "I'm sorry". My mother and my wheelchair bound father drove nonstop from Memphis to Seattle to be there when I arrived. Over the next 4 months I underwent many tests, treatments and prodding from the team at the hospitals in Seattle. On Nov 24, which happened to be my father's birthday my cancer was determined to be in remission in by medical team after rounds of treatments and surgeries. Talk about a humbling experience, I spent all of my time in a hotel in Seattle specifically set up for people undergoing treatments. Shuttles left every 15 minutes to take residents to treatments at the hospitals. After that experience you never seem to complain about the normal aches and pains of living.....I continue to still go for checkups to ensure that everything is within good parameter with my body...Before you think it, I never smoked anything in my life.

On May 15th 2009 I received a call from my mom saying she had taken my father to the hospital in Knoxville due to him experiencing pain and difficulty breathing. She said she would call me after the doctor saw him. When she did she informed me that the determined that he had COPD and advanced emphysema. She stated that they felt it was best for us(my brothers and I) to get back to Tennessee soon since they weren't sure how he would respond to treatment. It took approximately 18 hours for me to get back through a hodgepodge of flights. Upon arriving in Knoxville the next night my brothers stopped me prior to entering his room. They informed me that he had already been given his "last rites" and that I should not expect him to make it through the night. My father never did anything the easy way. He hung on til July 29th , 2009. Over that time I learned the cumulative effects of his smoking. His lung capacity decreased to less than 5%. He never breathed on his own after his admittance. Upon his admittance he weighed 175lbs, upon his death 85. I did not recognize my father at the end, that was hard, but knowing the suffering that he went through was the hardest. You never wish death on anyone, however, at the end, I just wanted my father to be at peace.

Fast forward to today, I have no family but I am lucky enough to work alongside over 120 employees here at Humpy's, Flattop, and Sub Zero. I can not ever imagine where it would ever be okay to subject them to an environment to where they might be impacted by the effects of smoking. I thoroughly understand the argument that government should not infringe on business owners rights. However, the rights of the employees and their immediate families should never be ignored. Smoking related illnesses will happen regardless of whether or not you pass the proposal, but doing your part to limit the exposure that workers have in their place of work is imperative. I implore you to keep it outside. Make no mistake, I do not have any issues with smokers unless they don't pick up their butts, I get it, it is an addiction like many things.

Ever since we have been smoke free we have noticed many things. First off we have noticed there are less employees with coughing related illnesses which in turn leads to less sick days and more productivity which makes the business better off financially. I can assure you our carpets and upholstery smell better as well. And being that we are known for great food and beer, I can assure you that our chefs are putting out a product that more people enjoy, great Alaskan seafood. I'm sure there will be dissenting opinions to mine, as I said, I have a unique perspective. Laws will never be perfect and they will be universally viewed as positive but they can be inherently for the betterment of the people. This is one of those times where making the tough decision is actually the easiest decision and smartest. In the end this law will not only protect people but save the State and its constituents millions on treatment for smoke related illnesses.

"KEEP IT OUTSIDE!"

Respectfully,

Pete Burns

"Head Dishwasher"



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