

The city council of Calabasas, California has recently deemed the exposure of the public to secondhand smoke a "public nuisance" and has therefore banned all smoking in city limits, excluding private residential property and certain "designated smoking areas." This new ordinance, far from really protecting non-smokers (or even smokers), has merely been a new experiment by anti-tobacco groups to see how far they can push their agenda, no matter how restrictive it is to the freedom of smokers. The city council's goal to "provide for the public health, safety, and welfare by discouraging the inherently dangerous behavior of tobacco use near non-tobacco users," will not even be effectively achieved. The ordinance put in place to stop a "public nuisance" will become a nuisance itself.

In order to survive under the new smoking ban, Calabasas smokers will have to become sneaky and reclusive. If a business does not have a designated smoking area, which the city council admits will take businesses some time to set up, an employee will have to hunt down a spot far away from any non-smoker congregation spot if he wishes to smoke. Furthermore, the smoker may have it demanded of him that he extinguish his cigarette or leave the area if a non-smoker happens to walk by. To keep away from any contemptuous non-smokers, smokers will have to either clandestinely smoke when no one is around or find a secluded, possibly unsafe location to have a lonely smoke break. Although it is easy for the non-smoking officials to say that smoking is prohibited in public areas, it is not so easy for smokers who have to live with the daily inconvenience, nor is it just for this to be required of them.

The main positive benefit the city council claims that the Comprehensive Secondhand Smoke Control Ordinance will have is to protect the health of citizens, especially children, from the harms of secondhand smoke. However, it makes logical sense to assume that if one is only allowed to smoke either at home or at a designated spot, then a more concentrated amount of

secondhand smoke would be found in these areas. Besides the obvious danger to smokers, the home environment where children and possibly non-smoking spouses are present would be much more dangerous than if the smoker had regular freedom to smoke where he chooses. The supposed 3,000 deaths of non-smokers due to exposure to secondhand smoke were likely not caused by the occasional annoying encounter one has with smoke when walking by the smoking section of a restaurant, but rather from the daily exposure to smoking either at home or the rare smoking-tolerant workplace.

If the city of Calabasas wishes to become healthier and reduce the number of people who smoke, this new ordinance is not the way to accomplish that objective. It is human nature to rebel against those who seek to oppress us. Consequently, all this ordinance will achieve is to anger smokers and possibly create a bigger negative reaction from tobacco supporters who before had stayed away from conflict. The constitutional rights and freedoms of a US citizen should not be compromised for the convenience of others.