In a significant boon to public health and worker safety, the California Legislature in 1994 banned smoking in nearly all enclosed workplaces. But bowing to the clout of the restaurant and bar industries and the social realities of smoking, the initial ban did not include bars, taverns, and gaming facilities.

For those workplaces, the ban was to be phased in, originally by January 1997. But under legislation approved last year, even that implementation date was pushed back to January 1998. Now, Assemblyman Dick Floyd has introduced a bill to extend the exemption indefinitely. His measure callously exposes one category of workers to the deadly hazards of secondhand smoke.

According to the California Department of Health Services secondhand smoke has been linked to lung cancer, lung disease, heart disease and other cancers in nonsmoking adults, killing an estimated 53,000 nonsmokers in the United States every year.

Bar employees face an especially elevated risk. Their exposure to secondhand smoke is estimated to be four to six times higher than other food or beverage service workers. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, smoke-filled rooms can have up to six times the air pollution as a busy highway.

In the past, individual bar and restaurant owners have claimed that a smoking ban would put them out of business and have negative impacts on their industry and tourism in California overall. But in many California communities where local ordinances have banned smoking in bars for years, no such adverse impacts have been noticed. In Marin County, 93 percent of restaurants reported no change or an improvement in business after the local ban went into effect. A survey in the city of San Luis Obispo two years after its ban went into effect found "no evidence of a negative economic impact."

The Floyd bill is opposed by the California Restaurant Association, the California Labor Federation, the American Lung Association, California Medical Association and virtually every other public health organization in the state. It is up before the Assembly Labor Committee on Wednesday, where it deserves to be defeated.

The Sacramento Bee editorial calls for tighter smoking bans in restaurants and bars, applying to them the same laws now governing smoking in public places in California. Drawing upon the reading passage above and your own experience, explain your views on smoking bans in bars, taverns and gaming facilities and your reasons for those views.

Note: While you are asked to give your opinion, your essay should also reflect a thoughtful consideration of the reading passage.