

Dear Public Health Committee:

March 7, 2011

I am speaking on behalf of several citizens that live in the State of Connecticut with connections to private clubs, as well as no affiliation with private clubs.

We feel that due to the State of Connecticut's oppressed economy and deficit, the passing of Bill 884 will not help the State's economy, but only hurt it. This is beyond second-hand smoke arguments. A private club, such as the American Legion or VFW, is an organization founded on sound principles and the backbone of a healthy economy. Regulating such organizations that are private to begin with and veteran based of all things, will only add to the economic woes that this country is already faced with. I and others are voicing our concerns in opposition to Bill 884 from reaching the House, Senate and Governor for signature. We feel that the Public Health Committee is over-extending their health related goals. When branches of government intervene into privately based organizations despite the health care organizations that support such a Bill, then this opens everything up to debate and liability. In this economy, we can't afford more lawsuits and leaving this up to the interpretation of the judicial court system. It has to stop here. I am not aware of any other states trying to pass legislation that regulates private clubs for goodness sake. Why does CT need to push to be the first? It will be a media nightmare and the citizens of this great State will start to question our Representatives.

On another note, an employee has a choice to work in a private club. That is their decision, no one is forcing them, there are plenty of non-smoking establishments that exist. These employees and citizens surveyed show little support toward this controversial Bill. Aside from the lobby groups and health organizations that may support it, then why pass law that has little public support? We have passed non-smoking laws in "public" places to protect the general public and that is wise, but again; there is a thing as going too far or "over-reaching" at this point. You are actually adding stress into people's lives because they feel strongly about their Constitutional and American rights, and their private enterprise beliefs. We should show more respect for our veterans and the Constitution. We are intruding into a veteran based area for which they fought and died for our freedom, so we need to back off and show gratitude, and leave the decision making up to their own boards and committees. Please re-think and re-consider raising this Bill or this will open up a can of worms and create more tax payer waste, press coverage and also impede on the re-election process of key politicians.

I for one am not a smoker, but this is not about pro-smoking or anti-smoking or health related reasons, this is about "respect", "choice", and "private rights" that are protected under our Constitution for which Connecticut is "The Constitution State", how easily we forget and most importantly, this is about "principle" - chipping away at our rights and taking away the small pleasures of life that are permitted. Where does it stop? To serve on a State Committee is a privilege, not a right. Please do not abuse your God-given public serving rights to infringe upon ones private or privacy rights.

Please inform if possible the present status of Bill 884.

Thank you.