

Smoking ordinance benefits everyone

New regulation fosters rights for student body, healthier campus air

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We know without a doubt that tobacco smoke harms others.

Whether from direct inhalation of cigarettes or even secondhand smoke, the damage to a person's health can be great. When Sorensen decided to champion a smoking ban on campus, it was not to punish smokers, but to improve the health of all students, faculty, and staff. Since the university forbids smoking within 25 feet of a building, many people on campus can breathe easy.

A friend of mine remarked that she hated walking into a building due to the smoke cloud she had to pass through. According to the Surgeon General's report, "The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke," exposure can inflame allergies or asthma and lead to other respiratory problems. Furthermore, according to the Center for Disease Control, secondhand smoke can "cause heart disease and lung cancer in nonsmoking adults." Imagine the danger one incurs when walking through that cloud of smoke everyday.

Inevitably, whenever an institution considers a smoking ban, smokers begin to complain about abuse of their rights. I will agree that a person does have a right to smoke. However, they do not have a right to endanger the health of others.

You do not have the right to yell "fire" in a crowded theatre. You do not have the right to make someone

not wear a seatbelt. You do not have a right to drive drunk. Why should smoking around nonsmokers be any different?

Last year, I worked in the state House of Representatives as a page, and saw the discussion that ensued when Rep. J. Todd Rutherford brought a statewide public smoking ban to the floor.

During debate, the legislature discussed if ventilation systems inside buildings could dispel harmful secondhand smoke, but research from the Plumbing, Heating, and Cooling Contractors Association dismissed that theory.

Though the bill was narrowly defeated, smoking bans in Charleston, here and possibly in Columbia will hopefully create more support in the next legislative session.

It is hard to refute the research of organizations such as the National Institute of Health, the CDC, the Surgeon General and the office of Health and Human Services when it comes to the effects of secondhand smoke.

You can smoke in your car and you can smoke in your home, but please respect USC's smoking ban of 25 feet from buildings, and do not smoke near other people on campus.