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## **Groups talk about creating state smoke-free law They seek legislation to prohibit smoking at work.**

Creating smoke-free work environments across the state was the topic of a town hall meeting Wednesday night at the downtown branch of the Allen County Public Library.

About 50 people gathered to hear presentations from Allen County Commissioner of Health Dr. Deborah McMahan; Mike Packnett, CEO of Parkview Health; Jay Gilbert, president of PHP; and others with vested interest in getting legislative action in the coming General Assembly to prohibit smoking in all Indiana workplaces.

Fort Wayne was the second of a series of town hall meetings generating support for the legislation.

Gilbert said his push for such legislation was both professional and personal. From an insurance cost perspective, people who smoke have increased health costs. But as the father of a son with severe asthma, he said he knows how crucial it is to ensure his son does not enter an environment where second-hand smoke will cause an asthma attack.

County Commissioner Nelson Peters said the work of the coalition who sponsored the town hall meeting - the Indiana Campaign for Smokefree Air - has started the momentum that could create a groundswell of support for a general workplace anti-smoking law.

Even in communities that have exemptions to county smoking ordinances, Tobacco Free Allen County Executive Director Dick Conklin said "state law trumps county or city law." As has occurred in Allen County, some incorporated areas have approved an exemption from county smoking bans, so businesses within the incorporated area may allow smoking.

Legislation supported by members of the Indiana Campaign for Smokefree Air, which includes Tobacco Free Allen County, Indiana Tobacco Prevention and Cessation, American Heart Association and close to 30 other groups, "addresses the inconsistencies between ordinances in communities and cities," Conklin said.

"We've led the charge in terms of a smoke-free (city or county) ordinance. Now we need to lead the charge with the state legislature to make it a level playing field," Conklin said, "that regardless of where you work, you're protected throughout the state."