

VFW Department of Pennsylvania Works with Lawmakers to Eliminate Smoking

The VFW's Department of Pennsylvania is working toward eliminating smoking from member organizations such VFW to help protect members, employees and their families from preventable health risks

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Department Commander Dwight Fuhrman has been contacting legislators to encourage the support of bills that would eliminate all smoking in private member-based clubs in the commonwealth.

Member-based groups, such as VFW, are exempted from Pennsylvania's Clean Indoor Air Act (CIAA), which was passed a decade ago. Fuhrman said some of his Department's Posts have shown interest in becoming nonsmoking establishments but fear losing business to other groups if the Department makes it a policy.

"Rather than putting our vital community service organizations at risk from any negative business impact from halting smoking, state lawmakers should create an even playing field by removing the CIAA exemption," Fuhrman said.

Fuhrman said getting rid of the exemption will help member-based organizations improve health among its patrons "without creating a competitive disadvantage that financially hurts" the groups.

"While the Pennsylvania VFW respects the rights of veterans to smoke, we also respect the rights of the many more veterans who do not smoke," said Fuhrman, a member of Post 8896 in East Berlin, Pa. "We want to attract and support not only veterans of all ages but also their family members."

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Fuhrman said he believes that creating a nonsmoking environment at Post canteens will have a positive effect on membership numbers and that he has already seen it firsthand at Post 8896.

“We went nonsmoking about 15 years ago, and we have a family-friendly environment.” Fuhrman said. “Everyone loves coming here. People bring their kids, and the Post is doing great.

“We are only 10 members short of 100 percent membership for the year,” he continued. “And we plan on getting there soon.”

This article is featured in the January/February 2018 issue of [Checkpoint](#), and was written by [Dave Spiva](#), senior writer, VFW magazine.