



LOCAL 538
United Food and Commercial Workers

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TO: Members, Madison City Council

FROM: Joe Jerzewski,
President and Business Manager
United Food and Commercial Workers Union, Local 538

RE: Repeal of the Madison smoking ban

This letter is to inform you that that Local 538 of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union has gone on record in favor of the immediate repeal of the city of Madison smoking ban.

There are two reasons we take this position.

Number one, we believe that thousands of working people are being punished by this ban, most often those who are low and moderate income. The smoking ban is hurting more and more workers in the Madison area everyday, and the evidence of that is everywhere. People losing their jobs because of a significant loss in business, or seeing their tips drop by 10, 20 or 30% is very common. I have spoken to far too many working people in the hospitality industry who given up health care, pre-school for their children, and many of the basic necessities of life.

There should be no confusion: this situation has been caused by a single action of the Common Council.

Second, we believe in the freedom of choice for our members. As president and business manager I represent in excess of 1,900 members belonging to Local 538. The smoking ban takes that choice away not only from our members, but residents of Madison in general, as well as small businesses who can make their own decisions about whether having a "no-smoking" establishment is the right course.

Some argue that the ban should stay in effect unless a public referendum to be held in April of 2006 reverses it. I could not disagree more strongly. If the Council felt this issue was that important originally they could have put it to a referendum immediately, but they chose not to do so. Workers are losing their jobs now – today – and the Council should remove the ban now – today.

We urge the City Council to repeal the ban and go back to a compromise the Council originally agreed to that protected the rights of both smokers and non-smokers alike.

This is an important decision that affects thousand of working people in Madison. I would appreciate a personal response on this matter.

Thank you.

Joseph Jerzewski