

# Restaurant/Bar Owner Testifies for Clean Indoor Air

## Restaurant/Bar owner shows filter clogged from tobacco tars

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MARYLAND-- Addressing a committee of state senators yesterday, Annapolis (Maryland) restaurateur Rusty Romo brought along some stomach-turning evidence to illustrate the harm of cigarette smoke. Mr. Romo, who recently renovated his bar area at Harry Browne's next to the State House, held up a filter that had been in its furnace for a month.

It was caked with thick black gunk [tar] - the byproduct, Mr. Romo said, of cigarette smoke.

"Restaurant and bar workers should not be exposed to someone else's bad habit," he said, urging senators to approve a bill that would add restaurants and bars to the list of workplaces where smoking is no longer tolerated.

But while Mr. Romo and several other restaurant workers testified in favor of the smokefree workplace bill, there were also plenty of people opposed to it. In addition to the Restaurant Association of Maryland, tobacco shop owners protested the proposal. Many restaurant owners say the smoking ban would drive away customers who like to smoke while having a drink or enjoying dinner.

But proponents of the bill counter with data showing increases in sales and more applications for new restaurants. They also highlight the serious health problems caused by secondhand smoke.

The bill, dubbed the Clean Indoor Air Act of 2005, has died several years in a row. Sen. Ida G. Ruben, the lead sponsor in the senate, thinks times have changed enough that the bill, SB332, will pass this year.

She noted not only the smokefree workplace laws in Montgomery and Talbot (Maryland) counties, but also the fact that several other states and countries have smokefree workplace laws, including Ireland and Italy.

Ms. Ruben said the current exemption of bars and restaurants from the smoking ban is a "glaring gap" that needs to be closed. "All employees should have the right to a smoke-free workplace," she said.

The bill also was filed in the House of Delegates as HB428 by Delegate Barbara A. Frush.

Maryland residents can send a letter of support at [www.smokefree.net/MD](http://www.smokefree.net/MD)

To win smokefree air where YOU live, go to  
<http://www.smokefree.net/alerts.php>

Joseph W. Cherner

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." Margaret Mead