

# Senate approves smoking ban; clubs, casinos win exemptions

Harrisburg – The Senate approved a statewide smoking ban with an amendment that carves out exemptions for smaller liquor licensees, private clubs and 25 percent of the casino gaming floor space where slot machines are located.

It is expected to cast a final vote today on the legislation sponsored by Sen. Stewart Greenleaf, R-Montgomery. The House is poised to consider a smoking ban bill sponsored by Rep. Michael Gerber, D-Montgomery.

The Senate legislation declares most workplaces and public places smoke-free and pre-empts local anti-smoking ordinances. The key amendment, approved 29-21, would exempt private clubs, including veterans' and fraternal clubs, and liquor licensees with food sales accounting for less than 20 percent of their business. A private club would fall under the smoking ban when its premises are rented or open to the public. Also exempt are nursing homes, residential treatment facilities, cigar fundraisers and tobacco exhibitions.

Senate Minority Leader Robert Mellow, D-Peckville, said the amendment will allow Pennsylvania casinos to stay competitive with casinos in Atlantic City and Las Vegas where smoking is allowed in a similar percentage of gaming floor space. But Mr. Greenleaf criticized the amendment for weakening the bill.

Sens. Lisa Boscola, D-Lehigh; Pat Browne, R-Lehigh; Raphael Musto, D-Pittston Township; and Mr. Mellow voted for the amendment.

Sens. Lisa Baker, R-Lehman Township; Roger Madigan, R-Burlington Township; and James Rhoades, R-Schuylkill, voted against the amendment.