

## **Ban smoking at all UH campuses**

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Across the country, about 1,200 colleges and universities prohibit smoking indoors and outdoors on campus, according to the American Nonsmokers' Rights Foundation. Of those, at least 811 ban tobacco use in any form. The numbers have tripled over the past three years as the University of California, the University of Guam, the University of Oregon and many others have recognized the leading role educational institutions play in the health and welfare of their broader communities.

A few years ago, it looked as if the University of Hawaii also would be at the forefront of this laudable national movement, which protects nonsmokers from lethal second-hand smoke and the social pressure to take up the addictive, deadly and expensive habit; smokers who may end up quitting or lighting up less; and the environment, as fewer discarded cigarette butts risk damaging Hawaii's land and marine ecosystems.

The Associated Students of the University of Hawaii passed a resolution in February 2012 in favor of a tobacco-free campus and the UH Faculty Senate endorsed the student government's resolution that March. In 2013, the state House and Senate followed up with resolutions encouraging the UH administration to develop and implement a tobacco-free policy. Last fall, Manoa administrators announced that just such a ban would take effect on Jan. 1, 2014.

Alas, that milestone was not achieved. The University of Hawaii Professional Assembly, the labor union that represents UH faculty, filed a prohibited-practices complaint, claiming that the administration should have negotiated the policy as a contractual issue. The next hearing on the matter is scheduled before the Hawaii Labor Relations Board in May.

In the meantime, though, the Legislature is considering House Bill 2077 and companion Senate Bill 2498, which would prohibit tobacco use on all UH campuses statewide. The ban would include "vaping" devices known as e-cigarettes, as the student government stated in its resolution and as the University of California system and many other colleges do.

Although we would prefer that this policy emanate from the UH's Board of Regents, it is reasonable for the Legislature to step in at this point. UHPA contends that its objection isn't about smoking, but what it considers the employer's failure to negotiate. Moreover, the union asserts that such policies should be systemwide, not campus-by-campus. That's all the more reason for lawmakers to act, codifying the ban for all 10 UH campuses statewide, just as they did for public elementary and high schools throughout the islands.

After all, our public educational institutions are more than mere state agencies. They are models for our youth. Tobacco use is the single-largest preventable cause of disease and death in Hawaii, according to the state Department of Health. Clearly, the model we should encourage is

tobacco-free.

This is all the more important knowing that 95 percent of smokers acquire the habit by age 21, according to the National Cancer Institute, which reports that adolescents and young adults are more likely to use tobacco than older people because they are more willing to take risks, are more influenced by social pressure and are highly susceptible to advertising.

As the Health Department noted in testimony supporting HB 2077, creating environments for young people where smoking and other tobacco use are not the norm helps dissuade them from behavior that could harm them for the rest of their lives. That's a public health benefit we should not ignore.

For all the attention the proposal has generated among faculty and staff, the fact is that there are thousands more young adults on college campuses than there are older ones. The key population to consider here is the students, and their representatives have supported this policy from the beginning.

The House and Senate bills do not include a penalty for lighting up, and that's how it should be. Nurturing a culture of health depends on peer pressure of a different sort, reflecting a community effort that reminds people what the rules are and makes violations socially unacceptable. Over time, as in jet planes and hotel rooms and workplaces and restaurants and bars, most folks cope just fine.

With these measures, the Legislature can clear the air at UH campuses statewide.