

Glendening Eases Stand On Smoking Ban Again

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ANNAPOLIS, March 17—Gov. Parris N. Glendening, facing strong legislative opposition to his proposed workplace smoking ban, offered today to allow smoking in all bars and private clubs that serve alcohol.

The offer marks the second concession Glendening has made in his proposed ban, which still would cover large restaurants and constitute one of the nation's toughest statewide restrictions on smoking.

In their present form, the regulations would prohibit smoking in virtually all indoor workplaces, including restaurants, bars and private clubs such as Elks lodges and American Legion halls. But Glendening (D) has said previously he would be willing to exempt restaurants and bars that seat 50 or fewer people and to allow smoking at larger establishments in enclosed, separately ventilated rooms.

The General Assembly, however, overwhelmingly rejected his plan, approving legislation this week to exempt all bars, clubs and restaurants that serve alcohol. Glendening had said he would veto such a measure, but House and Senate leaders have enough votes, for now at least, to override a veto.

Today, Glendening offered legislative leaders another concession: If lawmakers will drop the veto override, Glendening will agree to exempt all bars, regardless of size, and all clubs that serve alcohol.

"The governor has said he is very much willing to work with the legislature towards a compromise," said Glendening's press secretary, Diana Rosborough. "He is willing to accept some exemptions, and that would be towards bars and taverns," including private clubs, she said. "He is not willing to accept a compromise for restaurants, and if any legislation is sent to him that has that in there, he would veto it."

It was unclear tonight how lawmakers, who have been barraged by complaints about the ban from the tourist industry and the tobacco lobby, would respond. Senate President Thomas V. Mike Miller Jr. (D-Prince George's) said legislators are willing to work with the governor toward a compromise.

The smoking issue has become entangled in legal questions, making unclear the scope of the ban that may begin March 27.

If lawmakers don't accept Glendening's compromise, they probably will override his veto and put their less restrictive plan into effect. The state attorney general, however, says their plan could not take effect until June 1. That would give anti-smoking activists time to petition the entire issue to the November 1996 statewide ballot, delaying legislative action until that time.

Legislators disagree with the attorney general's opinion, however, and insist that a veto override, which could occur as early as March 27, should take effect immediately.