

No choice in the matter.

Dear House Political Subdivisions Committee Members,

As you hear HB 1213, we'd like to ask that you keep us in mind when voting and cast a YES vote to approve.

As debate students and coaches, we were exposed, with no option, to secondhand as well as third-hand smoke at our recent National Forensic League Debate tournament held in Fargo at the Doublewood Inn.

Due to a mix up in scheduling, our tournament, which is always held at the Doublewood Inn, was forced to use the rooms "that were left" after the motel was also booked by other conferences. The rooms that were left – SMOKING BEDROOMS located next to conference rooms used for tabulating the tournament and the judges lounge. All areas which the coaches needed to remain in during the tournament which, as a result, became heavy with student traffic.

The conditions were terrible to say the least. We were forced to walk down hallways that were filled with tobacco stench and compete in rooms that were so filled with smoke residue that judges and students using the rooms had difficulty breathing – let alone concentrating on the debate round. A couple of coaches were so affected by the smoke residue that they were unable to enter the rooms. Another coach, suffering from asthma, became ill and was miserable for the duration of the time she and her team spent at the motel.

Even though these instances seem bad enough – it gets worse. The SMOKING rooms being used for debate rounds.... actually were booked to the Grand Forks Debate team as their sleeping rooms.

We had no choice. When the motel told us they would be able to accommodate the tournament, they did not inform all of the students and coaches involved that we would be delegated to smoking rooms.

Now, you may say, they should have held their tournament at a school. All well as stated except that the tournament is held on a school day and any school hosting the tournament would need to dismiss for the day for the number of rooms needed. And, to reduce school travel, the NFL tournament is also held in conjunction with the NDHSAA State Debate tournament, which follows Friday after school and all day Saturday (and is held at a school).

Our recommendation is two-fold: First, we WILL encourage our tournament board to look for an alternative site for the tournament (even though we are contracted with the Doublewood for the next five years) and secondly, encourage you to vote YES on HB 1213 which, in one swoop, would address the problem.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Kaldor, May-Port CG Debate Coach and team
Scott Conrad, Grand Forks Central Debate coach