

Smoking Issue Not Dead, Says Assemblyman Griffin

Monday, 05 August 2013

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

Last month the Kodiak Island Borough Assembly failed to pass an ordinance that would put the question of whether or not to allow smoking in indoor public places on the fall ballot. The ordinance had received a substantial amount of criticism in the weeks leading up to its final vote, and come judgment day its prime backer, Assemblyman Aaron Griffin, was out of town.

But he was present during Thursday's meeting and took the opportunity to address the failed ordinance that he helped draft.

"I think I kind of pulled a grenade and walked away with my fellow assembly members holding the bag on that one. And I apologize for that. I didn't realize in the scope of things, it really wasn't planned, when I was looking at it, to not be here to defend an ordinance that I was a primary sponsor of."

Griffin admitted the ordinance wasn't perfect, but believed the issues could have been amended given more time. He said a lot of the criticism accused the assembly of trying to take away business owners' rights, but in reality the whole point was to put it on the ballot and allow the entire community of Kodiak to decide.

As for what would have appeared on the ballot, Griffin said it was all about workers' safety.

"When you break it down to brass tacks, whether an individual has an option to work somewhere or not, that does not relieve an employer from the fact and responsibility that they have to provide a safe working environment for their employees."

The ordinance may have failed to garner enough assembly support, but Griffin said the issue is far from dead.

"Until my seat is vacated I will continue to try to improve the lives of the workers in the hospitality industry in our town."