

## [Campus smoking bans are naked authoritarianism](#) [1]

Written by [Chris Snowdon](#) [2] | Wednesday 18 January 2012



When a Guardian journalist [attended an Adam Smith Institute event in October](#) [3], he came away convinced that libertarians are 'obsessed' with smoking. This, of course, is an outrageous slur (everybody knows libertarians are obsessed with guns and drugs), but how can freedom-minded individuals not take an interest in the naked authoritarianism of the anti-smoking lobby in 2012? Take events on US college campuses, for example:

*Looking for the designated smoking area at Florida International University? There is none.*

*Want to light a cigarette inside your car at the University of Florida? Don't let the cops see you.*

*Hoping to smoke during your break at Nova Southeastern University? You have six months left until NSU becomes the latest college to go tobacco-free. Come July 1, the covered smoking benches will come down and [smoke-free-campus signs will go up](#) [4].*

This is part of a growing trend towards 'smokefree' campuses, of which there are more than 600 in the Land of the Free. And by smokefree they mean no smoking anywhere inside or outside: not in the grounds, not on the pavement, not in the fields, not even in your own car.

But isn't a car, y'know, *private property*? Nova Southeastern University's 'director of campus recreation' has an answer for that:

"We don't want your car to be a safe haven, where you do any activity you want as long as you're in your car."

Heaven forbid there should a safe haven, especially for legal activities...

Meanwhile, Californians have done what Californians always do and taken the lunacy a step further. The University of California, San Francisco has not only banned smoking across its entire grounds and student digs, but also banned students and staff from carrying any form of tobacco. Taking the paternalism to absurd lengths, it has also banned people from using and carrying e-cigarettes—a battery-powered, tobacco-free nicotine delivery system with [no known health risks](#) [5]. The only nicotine products permitted on site are those made by the pharmaceutical industry, which just so happens to give lavish donations to anti-smoking groups around the world, including our very own Action on Smoking and Health.

The other nine University of California campuses have promised to follow San Francisco's lead by 2014 and, if history is any guide, it is only a matter of time before the UK does likewise. What is remarkable about this new phase of the anti-smoking crusade is how effortlessly it has shifted from a position of 'we must protect nonsmokers' to 'this is for your own good'. Say what you like about smoking ban in Britain,

but at least campaigners made an attempt to appeal to John Stuart Mill's harm principle. No longer. None of the universities have pretended that smoking outdoors is a threat to passers-by, just as the British Medical Association does not pretend that smoking alone in one's own car has implications for nonsmokers, but all they demanded a ban all the same.

Velvet glove, meet iron fist. Trampling on property rights; paternalism run riot; the tyranny of the majority? why would libertarians not be interested in this?

(Hat tip to [Dr Michael Siegel](#)<sup>[6]</sup>

, who wages a lonely war against cant and junk science from within the the anti-smoking movement)

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