

Chicago 'Jersey Boys' goes smoke-free



The Chicago production of "[Jersey Boys](#)" has gone smoke-free in the last few days. It is as if the Four Seasons never took so much as a drag.

But in New York and London, Frankie and the boys still puff away. That's because those more enlightened cities allow artistic exceptions to their bans on smoking in public. But as the anti-smoking law is written in Chicago, no such exception is possible. And the law makes no distinction between tobacco and herbal cigarettes.

I [wrote about the absurdity](#) of this when the smoking ban was first proposed. I am no fan of smoking but to legally require that shows pretend that no-one ever smoked in the history of the world is absurd, unreasonable, damaging to the city's cultural reputation and injurious to art.

I betcha' when Michael Mann's movie "Public Enemies" opens next year, you'll see actors lighting up. Gangsters were known to smoke. And did they not film this in Chicago? Inside buildings?

Aldermen! Seize the print! Consider this an official complaint.

Most people inside our city's government, I think, see the absurdity of this situation. And thus enforcement has, to say the least, been less than enthusiastic. There are numerous shows in town, right now, wherein the characters smoke. I won't name them. Wouldn't want to alert the police.

But when a patron complains—as someone did in the case of "Jersey Boys"—the Chicago police have no choice but to issue a warning. And thus there was no choice but to rid the smoke from the show. A spokesman said that "it took about a week" to figure out how to remove all the smoking from the Chicago production.

And as a result, everything is a bit less authentic.

And thus I say again, we need an exception for artistic purposes. A waiver. An understanding. Whatever. Heck, it doesn't even have to be for tobacco. It just has to allow Chicago's great artists to tell the truth.