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Editor
Tallahassee Democrat
P. O. Box 990
Tallahassee, Florida 32301

Dear Mr. Editor:

A week ago I read your editorial favoring a cigarette smoking ordinance. Your colleague, Mr. Sherer had spoken his piece in opposition a week prior to that. That seemed adequate without the rest of us getting into the fray.

Somehow, though, the arrival of the Magna Carta in town and it's custodian, Dean Oliver Fiennes' commentary about it's origin and impact on our government, caused me to reflect on contradictions between the thirteenth century document and your editorial.

The Magna Carta came about because the feudal landowners - barons, if you will - were distressed with a king who inflicted undue government oppression. - In my view you would have today's governmental leaders burden us with regulations not too different from those of the days of King John.

You say things are now o.k., but we need government to step in and insure it stays that way. Continuing, you say, "Sure, more and more places are being placed off limits to smokers - some restaurants are routinely segregating smokers - but the progress is slow, uneven and unpredictable."

Who, and by what right is to say by what standards we measure progress as "slow" or "unpredictable"? Progress, such as it is, is being achieved voluntarily and democratically. The proposed ordinance talks about restricting citizens rights in the confines of privately owned and operated businesses, and even in the bathrooms, if you will. When cash registers show a fall off among customers due to the habits of smokers, restaurants, hotels, theaters, stores, and the like will yield quickly to the economic pressure without governmental intrusion - of the sort that caused early English barons to rise up and reign in King John at Runnymede.

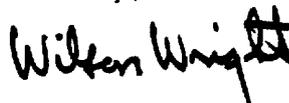
Indeed, when the public perceived caffeine as a problem, the manufacturers and distributors of coffee and cola responded - and without the threat of governmental intervention. When the public reacts in large enough measure, those who control the stores, restaurants, theaters and other privately owned quasi-public places, will see it in the cash registers and they will respond accordingly without government intervention.

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No, Mr. Editor, we have enough laws, regulations, and rules on the books now. Don't burden our already overtaxed police department and sheriff's office with trying to enforce one more oppressive rule - lest the citizens of this community eventually say Enough! - And then it will be to the City Hall (if not ours, somewhere in this nation) and there'll be another Declaration of Independence - or a new Magna Carta.

Sincerely,



Wilson W. Wright

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