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## Ban on Smoking for Top Tobacco State

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DURHAM, N.C. (AP) — In many states, Gary Richards would not have been able to light up a cigarette before biting into his meat-lover's pizza, as he did at Satisfaction Restaurant & Bar this week. But in North Carolina, the nation's leading tobacco producer, limits on indoor [smoking](#) have lagged behind those in much of the country.

That changed on Saturday, when smoking in restaurants and bars was banned by law in the state that produces nearly half of the nation's tobacco.

"There's smokers and there's nonsmokers; we've gotten along in the past," Mr. Richards, 52, said earlier in the week during a premeal smoke at the restaurant. "Why can't I come in here and have my beer and a couple of slices of pizza and a cigarette?"

The dangers of secondhand smoke to employee health and patron complaints about the smell finally won out when lawmakers approved the ban in 2009.

"This law doesn't tell anybody they shouldn't smoke," said State Representative Hugh Holliman, a lung [cancer](#) survivor whose sister died of lung cancer. He led the charge for the law. "It's saying nonsmokers should have the same right to breathe clean air."

North Carolina is at least the 29th state to ban smoking in restaurants and the 24th to ban it in bars, according to the American Lung Association.

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