

# Rev. Creech Responds to Rep. Tillis Rebuttal

By Rev. Mark H. Creech

Executive Director

Christian Action League of North Carolina, Inc.

Rep. Thom Tillis (R-Mecklenburg) is a choice and exceptional lawmaker for his district and the great State of North Carolina. I welcome his criticisms of my Op-Ed in the Charlotte Observer, [Conservatives, Say Yes to Ban](#). I have rarely been right about anything on every point; nevertheless, I still believe that in regards to this issue my assertions are essentially correct and grounded in truth.

Rep. Tillis notes that I start the Op-Ed with the claim that Utah and Arizona have passed state-wide smoking bans with no exemptions. He counters by saying, "Utah and Arizona have several exemptions in the legislation they passed" and then he shows links to substantiate his position. It is true that all state-wide smoking bans have some exemptions. Even Holliman's bill, which is a state-wide bill, has some exemptions. But smoking bans are typically defined broadly as either "state-wide" or "partial." What I meant by saying that Arizona and Utah have no exemptions was that they are state-wide bans, comprehensive in their import and that their effect has more than a partial impact on the state. It's like saying that a comprehensive state-wide smoking ban is a 100% smoke free, which is common language used in this debate to describe a comprehensive smoking ban like those in Utah and Arizona and the one proposed by Holliman. But that certainly doesn't mean that there are not some exceptions. Understanding smoking bans in this way is factual and certainly not misleading.

Still, I understand how it could be perceived as misleading and that was certainly not my intent. Perhaps it would have been better to say that Utah and Arizona, two of the most conservative states in the U.S. have approved state-wide, comprehensive smoking bans with no "major" exemptions and been clearer. But even that wouldn't have changed the main point, which is correct – two of the most conservative States in the country – ranked among the top ten conservative Republican States – voted for comprehensive state-wide smoking bans with no exemptions – other than those exemptions most common to the most stringent forms of smoking bans. This is, without question, as Rep. Tillis notes, "the reason both Arizona and Utah received "A" ratings in the American Lung Association's publication "State of Tobacco Control: 2008."

Second, Rep. Tillis argues that my use of the Elon Poll is misleading. Sadly, I believe that he misses the point of my Op-Ed. The mention of the Elon Poll was simply to substantiate the contention that North Carolina is largely a conservative State and supports a state-wide ban. It is Rep. Tillis who insist on imposing the need for a poll that would provide information concerning the public's support for some exceptions, which he does, most unfortunately, with an unscientific poll.

Third, Rep. Tillis argues that my Op-Ed portrays the Republicans as "insensitive to the public health issues and unwilling to work to enact a fair smoking ban." This is where I must say, with the deepest respect, that he is patently wrong. Rep. Tillis should know that I too am a Republican and though I differ with him on this issue, I am quite certain that there is not likely to be even one Republican in the NC General Assembly that is to the right of me. My Op-Ed is not an attack on Republicans, but an appeal to all conservatives who are struggling with this legislation. The Op-Ed

addresses the arguments that conservatives (conservative Republicans and Democrats) make for freedom of choice and private property rights as a legitimate reason for killing this measure. The Op-Ed does not seek to indict, but to plead with conservatives for a broader understanding of why this bill has genuine merit.

Lastly, Rep. Tillis argues that conservatives are willing to support a ban with exceptions. However, the concerted attempt of most conservatives has been to kill this bill, not to save or amend it. Rep. Tillis comes across as though conservatives have tried to amend this legislation with exemptions that most North Carolinians would accept. I, and other proponents of this measure are eager to see a good faith offer of compromise that protects all of the State's people, because before my Op-Ed no efforts to amend this legislation, except on small technicalities, has even existed.

I wish to conclude my remarks by reiterating that I have profound respect for Rep. Tillis and his service to the people of North Carolina. And I have no ulterior motives in supporting this bill, in fact; I am subject to receive more headaches because of the misunderstandings and false perceptions that may evolve from my conservative friends' inability to understand my support of it. But when there is a moral principle at stake, which in this case is the government's God-given mandate to provide the best protection for life and health possible - a faithful minister of Christ cannot selectively choose the moral principles he will or will not support, nor does he have the luxury of deciding whether he stands with the "liberal leadership" or the Republican caucus. His calling is to be prophetic - to provide a moral compass for all - to stand for righteousness and the truth. If that should result in various forms of crucifixion, then this is a necessary price for bringing redemption.

I do not mean to say or imply by these remarks that Rep. Tillis and those who oppose HB 2 have malice toward me or wish to crucify me on this issue. However, my closing remarks are meant to make it clear to all conservatives why I believe it is necessary to sometimes break away from the pack, so to speak, and support legislation like HB 2. I believe that the arguments I have made for HB 2 are strong and I would that all of my conservative friends join me in support for this bill.