# Casino Workers Sue for Smoking Ban in Atlantic City Casino Premises



On May 13, 2024, a lawsuit was brought before Superior Court Judge Patrick Bartels in Atlantic City, where casino workers are demanding a ban on smoking within casino premises. These employees, represented by the United Auto Workers union, argue that the smoke-filled environment is hazardous to their health, citing illnesses such as bronchitis, asthma, and cancer linked to secondhand smoke.

The lawsuit challenges New Jersey's indoor smoking law, which currently exempts casinos, allowing smoking on 25% of the casino floor. Despite this provision, workers contend that smoke permeates other areas, creating an unhealthy work environment.

The state, represented by Deputy Attorney General Robert McGuire, opposes the ban, pointing out economic considerations. Specifically, it is argued that prohibiting smoking could jeopardize substantial revenues from the casinos, which contribute to a Casino Revenue Fund benefiting senior citizens and the disabled. In fiscal year 2024, this fund is expected to allocate $526 million to such programs.

The state's argument highlights potential negative economic impacts, including past examples where attempts to ban smoking led to significant revenue losses for casinos. Nevertheless, proponents of the ban dispute these claims, citing studies suggesting that casinos have financially thrived in other regions following similar smoking bans.

Governor Phil Murphy has indicated willingness to sign a smoking ban into law, but concerns about economic repercussions have tempered this position.

The court has yet to make a decision, but Judge Bartels intends to issue a ruling promptly. The dispute encapsulates a broader national debate, with similar anti-smoking efforts underway in states like Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Kansas, and Virginia.