

# Ministers ask Hill to back tobacco regulation

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It may not be classified as a sin, but smoking isn't healthy. And that's why the Monroe County Religious Leaders group wants U.S. Rep. Baron Hill (D-Ind.) to support federal regulation of tobacco.

The group will draft a formal resolution in support of bill H.R. 1108, which will allow

the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to regulate tobacco.

At a meeting Wednesday morning, the Rev. Bill Breeden told the group of his own addiction to tobacco. Breeden said he once went without food for 21 days as part of a protest.

"It was much easier to stop eating than it was to stop smoking," he said.

Now tobacco-free for five months, Breeden brought the

Rev. Dan Gangler of the Hoosier Faith and Health Coalition to explain and ask for support for the bill.

"I come to it with a theological base," Gangler said of his stance against tobacco. He said that because the body is a gift from God, people must refrain from doing it any harm.

"We need to fight this," Gangler said. "We need to go against this."

The group hopes to convince Hill to support the plan. Hill's staff told Breeden the congressman was still considering his stance on the bill.

According to documents from the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, 77 percent of registered voters surveyed in March 2007 were in favor of a Congressional bill giving the FDA regulation authority over tobacco products. The same survey also showed that 70 percent of smokers and 78 percent of nonsmokers support the bill.

"The fact is that this is a dangerous and deadly drug," Breeden said.

Breeden said his reason for quitting was his grandson. He said that although he loved to smoke, he didn't want his grandson to pick up the habit.

"Most smokers I know are concerned about their children," he said.