



City of Chicago
Committee on Finance
City Hall - Room 302

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Chairman

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Alderman Burke Seeks to Ban Use of Dry Cleaning Solvent Linked to Cancer

(October 2, 2002) The City of Chicago would force area dry cleaners to stop using a controversial cleaning solvent linked to cancer by next summer under an ordinance unveiled by Alderman Edward M. Burke.

The ordinance seeks to ban a dry cleaning solvent called "perc" by June of 2003 because scientific studies have identified it as a potential carcinogen.

Perchloroethylene, known as "perc," has been linked to deaths from some cancers including bladder, lung, esophagus, intestine and cervix, according to research published last year by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Major cities, such as Los Angeles, San Francisco and New York have already acted to heavily regulate the use and disposal of perc, which is also used to clean metals.

Perc is rated among the highest cancer risks to humans, right after exposure to diesel fuel, according to scientific experts. Perc has been widely used as a dry cleaner since the 1950s. By the 1970s, it was found to cause cancer in laboratory animals. It is estimated that a typical dry cleaner may use between 80 and 100 gallons of perc a year. The chemical finds its way into the atmosphere through air, water and soil pollution.

Alternatives to the solvent are available and already in use by some dry cleaners across America and include hydrocarbon solvents, carbon dioxide cleaners and computer-controlled sprayers and dryers.

"While the dry cleaning industry can be expected to aggressively resist this effort to ban the use of perc in Chicago, I believe that recent scientific studies give us little choice but to heed their warnings," Alderman Burke said. "Dry cleaning establishments will simply have to update their methods and move into the 21st Century."

For more information contact Donal Quinlan, media liaison, at (312) 744-6237.

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Article X. Phosphorus and ~~Tetrachloroethylene, Perchloroethylene or Pans~~ Control

Section 2. Chapter 11, Section 4, of the Municipal Code of the City of Chicago is amended by adding Section 11-4-1635 as follows:

11-4-1635 It shall be unlawful for any person, firm or corporation to sell, offer, or expose for sale, give or furnish any product containing tetrachloroethylene, perchloroethylene or pers manufactured for dry cleaning machines and equipment or for removal of greases from metals, within the City of Chicago from and after June 30, 2003.

Section 3. This ordinance shall be effective upon passage and publication.

Edward M. Bender;