



JAMES N. WITKOWIAK
ALDERMAN, 12TH DISTRICT

What the Prescription Label Proposal Does NOT Do

Statement of Alderman James N. Witkowiak
October 28, 2010

The intent of my proposed legislation (Common Council file# 100334) to require prescription container label data to be obliterated prior to disposal is **NOT** to punish but to prevent further drug abuse in this city. An ordinance like this must have some sanction, and it is my wish that only serious or repeat violators would be fined – not those who make simple errors. Also, those who for various reasons and circumstances cannot comply need not fear police action. Police officers have discretion and will use that discretion in individual cases.

Secondly, the Health Department did not address this issue or propose public education on it until I raised it. Now, the Health Department wants to launch an education campaign.....good and likely about time.

In fact, the Health Department spokesperson has said that the issue of illegal prescription refilling is a problem that needs to be addressed.

The proposal was approved last week on a 4-1 vote by the Public Safety Committee, and an alderman on that panel said that he sometimes calls in a prescription refill over the phone and picks it up at a drive-in window – all while never being asked to show ID.

Further, the chief of staff to the Chief of Police, Joel Plant, spoke at the committee hearing and said that MPD neither opposes nor supports the proposal, but would consider it another tool to use in the fight against drugs.

Criticism about pharmacies being exempted from the ordinance is valid. It was the intent to exempt hospitals because it is assumed that they dispose of their medical waste in a secure manner. To exempt pharmacies was an inadvertent error which will be corrected before the ordinance comes up for a final vote before the Common Council.

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This ordinance proposal simply calls upon citizens to remove or obliterate certain information (name, address, medication name and prescription number) from drug prescription containers. Information obliteration can be accomplished by inking out or paring data off the label prior to disposal.

It is to the advantage of the citizen and society that this be done. This is a proactive attempt to deal in another way with our corrosive drug problem that leads to crime and despair in Milwaukee.