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New Wisconsin Bill Proposes Green Cleaning Mandates

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By Nick Bragg, Deputy Editor

Following the same path taken by neighboring Illinois, Wisconsin may be the next state to mandate the use of [green cleaning products](#) and processes in public educational buildings and municipalities.

The “[Green Cleaning](#) For A Healthier Wisconsin” bill, proposed by Rep. Cory Mason, D-Racine, Wis., would require public educational buildings to use [cleaning](#) and [paper products](#) certified as [environmentally sensitive](#) by third-party certifiers, including [Green Seal](#), EcoLogo, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Design for the Environment Program (DfE), Greenguard Environmental Institute and the Carpet and Rug Institute (CRI).

“This is a great bill that helps schools and local communities make their buildings [less toxic](#) for kids and the public who use them, and reduces our [carbon footprint](#) in the state of Wisconsin,” says Mason.

After the [green cleaning](#) bill received backlash from opposition in its initial stages, an amended version was approved by the Assembly Committee on Natural Resources in the final week of January. The recent amendment would give schools and municipalities three years to comply and allows agencies to opt out if they demonstrate that their [cleaning costs](#) would increase.

If signed into law, the Wisconsin bill would apply to general purpose cleaners, [restroom cleaners](#), glass cleaners, floor and [carpet cleaners](#), hand soap, toilet tissue and paper towels, vacuum cleaners, carpet extractors and laundry care products.

The plan does not prohibit the use of [disinfectants](#), sanitizers or any other antimicrobial products registered under federal law that, when necessary, are needed to protect public health.

The plan also would require public educational institutions and municipalities to adopt [cleaning systems](#) (products, equipment and instructions for specified [cleaning](#) use) that meet the standards set forth by one of the following organizations: U.S. [Green Building](#) Council’s Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design for Existing Buildings: Operations and [Maintenance](#) (LEED-EBOM); Green Seal’s Environmental Standard for Commercial and Institutional [Cleaning Services](#) (GS-42); Healthy School Campaign’s Quick and Easy Guide to [Green Cleaning](#) In Schools; ISSA’s Cleaning Industry Management Standard – [Green Building](#) (CIMS-GB); and Greenguard’s Children and Schools standard.

The bill is scheduled to come before full Assembly for a vote. If enacted, the bill would take effect on July 1, 2011. Agencies would have two years to adopt approved products and three years to implement an approved [cleaning system](#).

As of February, 10 states have passed legislation recommending or requiring [green cleaning](#). Similar bills are expected to be debated this year in at least five states, including Wisconsin.