

LOOP NORTH NEWS

Legislation introduced to extinguish high-rise sprinkler mandate

By Steven Dahlman

28-Mar-14 – If sprinklers are ever required in high-rise buildings, a state representative from Chicago is trying to make sure the mandate comes from lawmakers and not the fire marshal.



Sara Feigenholtz (left), representing Lincoln Park and other lakefront neighborhoods north of the Loop, has introduced an amendment to her bill in the Illinois House of Representatives to create a Task Force on Fire Prevention and Fire Safety. The task force would consist of 21 members appointed by various state agencies as well as one member appointed by the mayor of Chicago. It would include building owners and managers, Realtors, and representatives of homeowner associations.

After studying the costs and benefits of fire sprinkler systems, the task force would summarize its findings and recommendations in a report to the General Assembly by July 15, 2015.

“It will then be the responsibility of the elected General Assembly, not the State Fire Marshal, to adopt any rules requiring the installation of fire sprinklers in any structure,” says Feigenholtz on her website.

Last August, after what he said was “an unprecedented amount of public input,” Fire Marshal **Larry Matkaitis** (right) backed down on a proposal to require sprinklers in many high-rise buildings in Chicago. The proposal was not well received by condominium associations, homeowners, and business owners who would have to pay for and install the sprinklers.



Feigenholtz's amendment was inspired by what 42nd Ward Alderman **Brendan Reilly** calls "a renewed push in Springfield to administratively approve a costly new sprinkler mandate that would hit Chicago homeowner budgets hard."

In his weekly newsletter to constituents, Reilly said proponents of the sprinkler mandate are trying to get the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules – 12 state lawmakers who review and clarify new laws – to advance their proposed regulations.



"JCAR does not typically review and approve huge, multi-million dollar state mandates like the proposed sprinkler mandate," Reilly (left) wrote on Wednesday. "Major public policy like this is typically routed through the full legislative process."

The alderman says the proposed sprinkler mandate is "not only clumsy public policy, it poses a very real financial risk for hundreds of thousands of Chicago homeowners."

On Thursday, HB 4609 was placed on the House's calendar for a second reading and debate.

🔵 Previous story: [Fire Marshal drops high-rise sprinkler proposal](#)

By **Steven Dahlman** | **Loop North News** | Published 28-Mar-14 4:04 AM