

WISCONSIN STATE
LEGISLATURE
COMMITTEE HEARING
RECORDS

2005-06

(session year)

Senate

(Assembly, Senate or Joint)

Committee on
Agriculture and
Insurance
(SC-AI)

File Naming Example:

Record of Comm. Proceedings ... RCP

- > 05hr_AC-Ed_RCP_pt01a
- > 05hr_AC-Ed_RCP_pt01b
- > 05hr_AC-Ed_RCP_pt02

Published Documents

> Committee Hearings ... CH (Public Hearing Announcements)

> **

> Committee Reports ... CR

> **

> Executive Sessions ... ES

> **

> Record of Comm. Proceedings ... RCP

> **

*Information Collected For Or
Against Proposal*

> Appointments ... Appt

> **

> Clearinghouse Rules ... CRule

**

> Hearing Records ... HR (bills and resolutions)

> **05hr_ab0544_SC-AI_pt01**

> Miscellaneous ... Misc

> **

Vote Record
Committee on Agriculture and Insurance

Date: 10/26/05

Moved by: Brown

Seconded by: Hansen

*Unanimous
 consent
 to introduce
 the
 amendment*

AB _____ SB 250 Clearinghouse Rule _____
 AJR _____ SJR _____ Appointment _____
 AR _____ SR _____ Other _____

A/S Amdt 1 to SB 250
 A/S Amdt _____ to A/S Amdt _____
 A/S Sub Amdt _____
 A/S Amdt _____ to A/S Sub Amdt _____
 A/S Amdt _____ to A/S Amdt _____ to A/S Sub Amdt _____

Be recommended for:
 Passage Adoption Confirmation Concurrence Indefinite Postponement
 Introduction Rejection Tabling Nonconcurrency

<u>Committee Member</u>	<u>Aye</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Absent</u>	<u>Not Voting</u>
Senator Dan Kapanke, Chair	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Senator Neal Kedzie	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Senator Ronald Brown	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Senator Luther Olsen	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Senator Jon Erpenbach	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Senator David Hansen	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Senator Mark Miller	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Totals: _____

Motion Carried Motion Failed

Vote Record Committee on Agriculture and Insurance

Date: 10/26/05

Moved by: Brown

Seconded by: Hansen

As Amended SB 250

AB _____ SB 250 As Amended Clearinghouse Rule _____
 AJR _____ SJR _____ Appointment _____
 AR _____ SR _____ Other _____

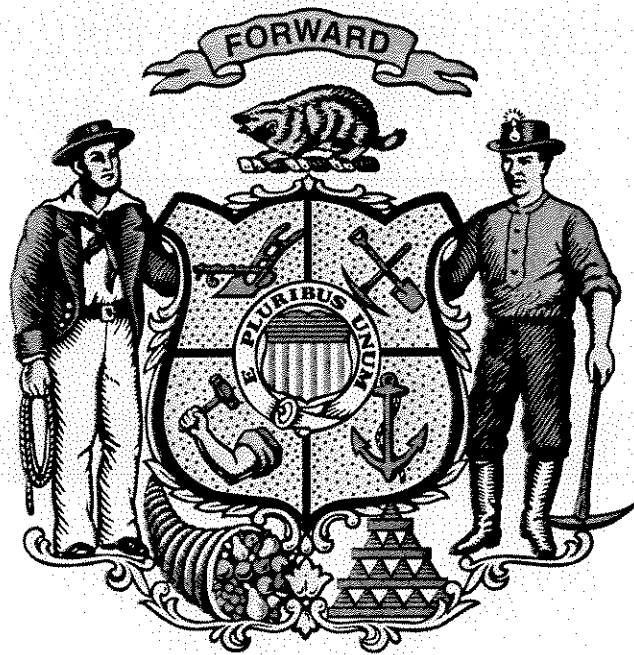
A/S Amdt _____
 A/S Amdt _____ to A/S Amdt _____
 A/S Sub Amdt _____
 A/S Amdt _____ to A/S Sub Amdt _____
 A/S Amdt _____ to A/S Amdt _____ to A/S Sub Amdt _____

Be recommended for:
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 Introduction Rejection Tabling Nonconcurrency

As amended

<u>Committee Member</u>	<u>Aye</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Absent</u>	<u>Not Voting</u>
Senator Dan Kapanke, Chair	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Senator Mark Miller	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Totals: _____



Dan Kapanke

Wisconsin State Senator - 32nd District



MEMORANDUM

Office of Senator Dan Kapanke

TO: Members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Insurance

FROM: Senator Dan Kapanke, Chair, Senate Committee on Agriculture and Insurance

DATE: November 30, 2005

RE: Executive Action Paper Ballot

Please consider the following bill and vote on the motion below. **Return this ballot to Senator Dan Kapanke, Room 104 South, no later than 12:00 p.m. Friday, December 2, 2005.** Committee members' ballots not received by the deadline will be marked as not voting.

Assembly Bill 544

Relating to: automatic fire sprinkler systems in certain residence halls and other student residential facilities and granting rule-making authority.

By Representatives Kreibich, Krawczyk, Hines, Ott, McCormick, Molepske, Lamb, Vruwink, Cullen and Shilling; cosponsored by Senators Brown, Olsen, Risser, Lassa and Plale.

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MOTION

- Moved by Senator Kapanke that AB 544 be recommended for concurrence:

Aye X No

Signature 

Dan Kapanke

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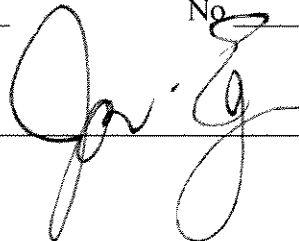
MOTION

- Moved by Senator Kapanke that AB 544 be recommended for concurrence:

Aye _____

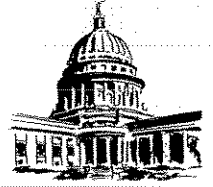
No _____

Signature _____



Dan Kapanke

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MOTION

- Moved by Senator Kapanke that AB 544 be recommended for concurrence:

Aye X No

Signature Dave Hansen

Dan Kapanke

Wisconsin State Senator - 32nd District

Senator Neal Kedzie
Room 313 South
State Capitol



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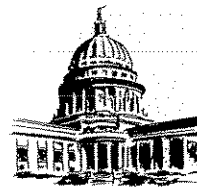
Aye X No

Signature Neal J. Kedzie

Dan Kapanke

Wisconsin State Senator - 32nd District

Senator Ron Brown
Room 409 South
State Capitol



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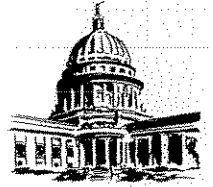
Aye X No

Signature *Ron Brown*

Dan Kapanke

Wisconsin State Senator - 32nd District

Senator Mark Miller
Room 106 South
State Capitol



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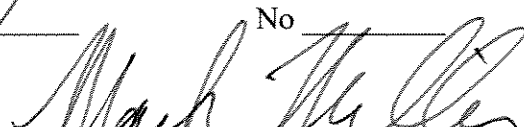
MOTION

- Moved by Senator Kapanke that AB 544 be recommended for concurrence:

Aye

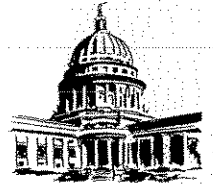
No

Signature



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Aye No

Signature 

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Aye _____

No _____

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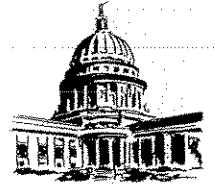
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Aye _____ No _____

Signature _____

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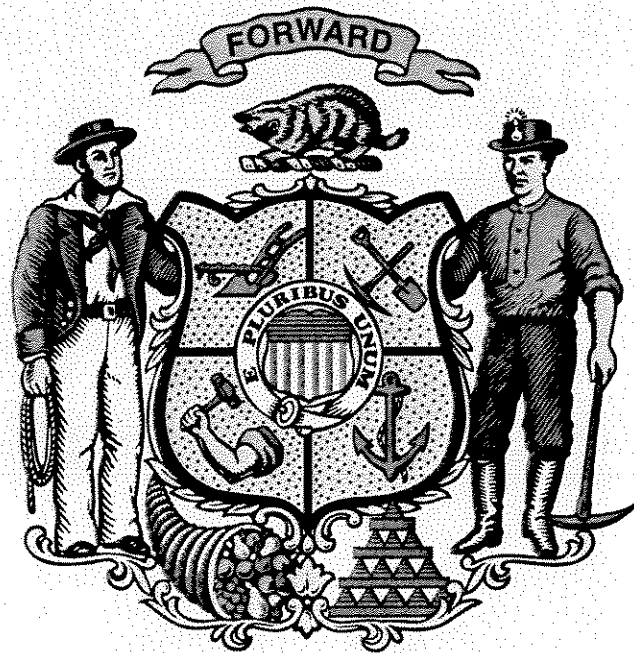
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MOTION

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Aye _____ No _____

Signature _____





**WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
AMENDMENT MEMO**

2005 Assembly Bill 544	Assembly Amendment 2
<i>Memo published: October 10, 2005</i>	<i>Contact: Mary Matthias, Senior Staff Attorney (266-0932)</i>

Current Law

Under current law, all University of Wisconsin (UW) System residence halls and dormitories over 60 feet tall that were constructed before April 26, 2000, must be retrofitted with an automatic fire sprinkler system on each floor before January 1, 2006. (An exception to this requirement is Ogg Residence Hall at UW-Madison, which does not have to be retrofitted until January 1, 2008.)

Also under current law, all UW System residence halls and dormitories that are constructed on or after April 26, 2000, must be built with an automatic fire sprinkler system on each floor, regardless of the height of the building.

This bill applies the same automatic fire sprinkler requirements that currently apply to UW dorms and residences halls to all of the following:

1. All student residential facilities that are operated by fraternities, sororities, or other organizations authorized or sponsored by an institution of higher education.
2. Residence halls and dormitories that are owned or operated by other institutions of higher education.
3. "Private student residential buildings." Under the bill, a "private student residential building" is defined as a "privately owned and operated residential building" that:
 - Has a capacity of at least 100 occupants;
 - Is occupied by persons at least 80% of whom are enrolled in an institution of higher education; and
 - Has attributes usually associated with a student residence hall or dormitory such as a food service plan or occupancy by a resident advisor.

Under the bill, the buildings described under items 1. to 3., above, that are over 60 feet tall and that were constructed before the bill becomes law must be retrofitted with an automatic fire sprinkler system within five years after the effective date of the bill.

Buildings of the type described under items 1. to 3., above, that are constructed on or after the effective date of the bill must be built with an automatic fire sprinkler system on each floor, regardless of the height of the building.

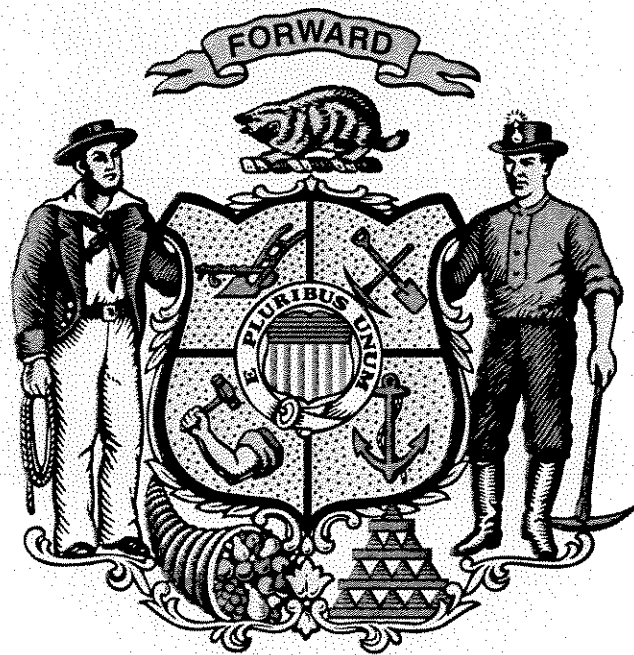
Assembly Amendment 2

Assembly Amendment 2 changes the effective date of the provision that requires retrofitting of already-existing buildings from five years after the effective date of the bill to January 1, 2014 (approximately eight years after the expected effective date of the bill).

Legislative History

On October 4, 2005, Assembly Amendment 2 was offered by Representative Kreibich, and recommended for adoption by the Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities on a vote of Ayes, 6; Noes, 4. The committee recommended passage of the bill, as amended, on a vote of Ayes, 9; Noes, 1.

MM:rv



- Fire Sprinklers -

PROTECTING WISCONSIN STUDENTS

saving lives preventing injuries reducing damages

Each Year, an average of 1,500 fires cause \$9 million in damage to university residence halls and Greek housing, according to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

The NFPA has never been able to document a single instance of a multiple loss of life in a building with a sprinkler system that is fully functional and adequately designed in the 100+ years that these systems have been in use.

Wisconsin Law

- In 1999, Wisconsin passed Act 43 to help make UW System residential facilities safer. Act 43 required residence halls and dormitories greater than 60 feet in height to be retrofitted with automatic fire sprinklers and those built after April 26, 2000 to install sprinklers.
- This bill would have similar requirements for private colleges and universities – sprinkler systems in all new construction and those residence facilities greater than 60 feet in height. Fraternity and sorority houses are also included to be retrofitted with sprinkler systems.

Sprinklers: Proven Facts

- Sprinklers are on duty around the clock.
- Sprinklers activate quickly, within 30 seconds to 4 minutes—consistently faster than the fastest fire department.
- Sprinkler water flow can transmit a signal to summon firefighters.

For these and other reasons, sprinklers achieve the following results:

- An NFPA study done from 1989-98 showed that deaths caused by hotel and motel fires (the structures most similar to dorms) were reduced by 91% when sprinklers were present.
- In the same study, property damage per hotel/motel fire was 56% less in structures with sprinklers vs. structures without sprinklers.
- Sprinklers reduce residential property losses by 85% (American Fire Safety Association)
- Overall, sprinklers proved to decrease the chances of dying in a fire by 33-66%.

Sprinklers: Debunked Myths

- **Sprinkler heads are individually triggered** – fire melts or breaks their sensing elements typically at temperatures in excess of 140-225° F. Sprinklers only release water in the area that the fire is burning.
- Residential fires are usually suppressed by one sprinkler head
- Any potential water damage is minimal and contained, especially compared to the smoke and fire damage caused by a fire that is allowed to burn unabated.
- Still worried about water damage? Quick-response sprinklers rely on 8-24 gallons of water per minute to shut down or control a fire. A fire house gushes 50-125 gallons/minute.

Sprinklers: A Valuable, Affordable Protection

- The average dorm can be protected with a single sprinkler.
- Sprinkler installation costs in new construction run about the same as carpet costs (\$1-\$2/ft²)
- The cost for retrofitting is between \$1.50 & \$2.50 per ft² (UW-Madison's cost to retrofit Chadbourne Hall was \$2.36/ft²)
- Private colleges & universities and fraternities/sororities can capture significant insurance savings by installing sprinkler systems.

FIRE SPRINKLER SYSTEMS IN ALL COLLEGE DORMS

Listening to the Experts – Be Proactive, Save Lives:

"If we had sprinklers in that fraternity house, the five students that were killed would be living, active members of our society today. Now, all of the fraternities and sororities in Chapel Hill have these systems, and I sleep better at night knowing this. How many more times is this going to happen before the lessons are learned."

- Dan Jones, Fire Chief, Chapel Hill, NC

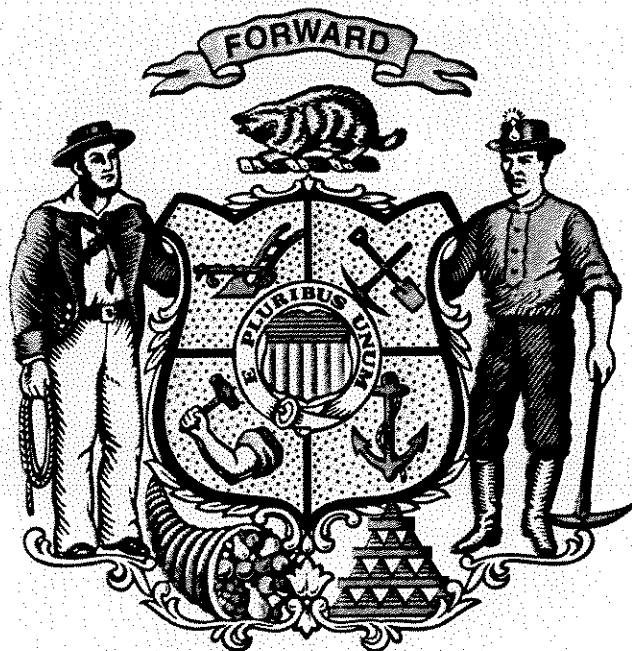
"Would Sprinklers have helped (*referring to a Tennessee dorm fire*)? Sprinklers always help. They are a just a really good tool. But they were not required in that dorm. There was nothing faulty about them not being there.

- Kim Lawson, Deputy Fire Chief, Nashville, TN

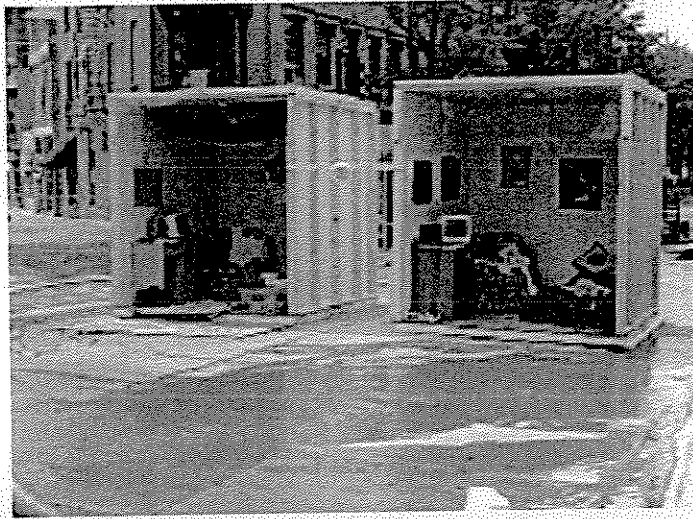
"The Honolulu Fire Department recognized that cost is an issue but would like to point out that the added safety is well worth it. When you have a sprinkler system in the building, it's like having a firefighter in your room. It'll go off and control the fire until we get there. We have numerous videos that will show you the case."

- Attilio Leonardi, Fire Chief, Honolulu, HI

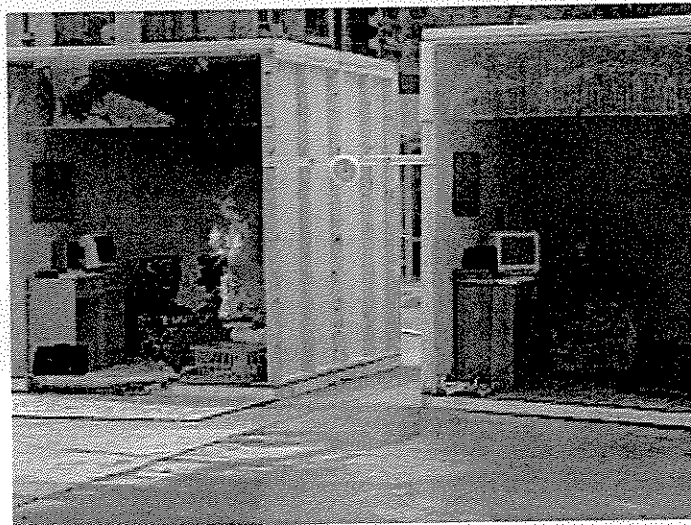
According to a September 1999, joint report by the National Fire Protection Association and the U.S. Fire Administration, 25 percent of college housing fires occur in buildings over seven stories. These taller buildings pose special problems for fire fighters as upper floors are difficult to reach and emergency evacuation is complicated by large numbers of residents.



LIVE BURN DEMO – MADISON, WI September 6, 2005
ON LEFT: LACK OF A FIRE SPRINKLER SYSTEM
ON RIGHT: EQUIPPED WITH A FIRE SPRINKLER SYSTEM



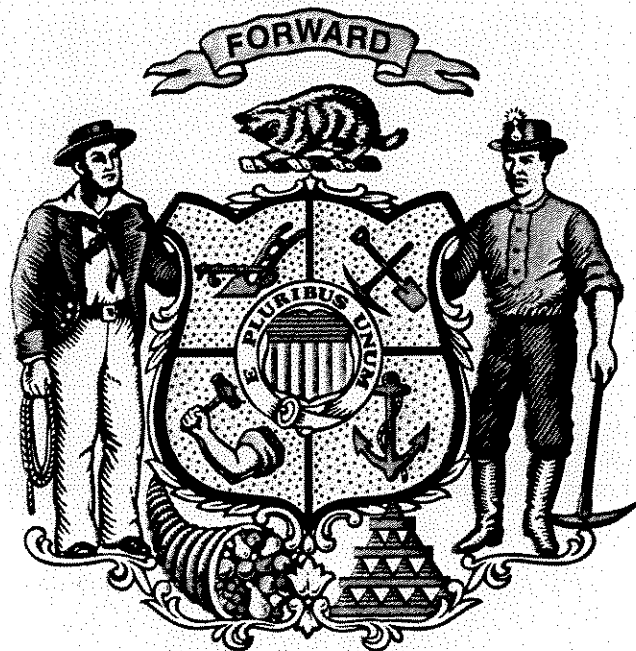
**TWO TRASH CANS WERE IGNITED SIMULTANEOUSLY
WITHIN 14 SECONDS THE SMOKE ALARMS WENT OFF**



WITHIN 55 SECONDS THE FIRE SPRINKLERS WENT OFF, CONTAINING THE BLAZE

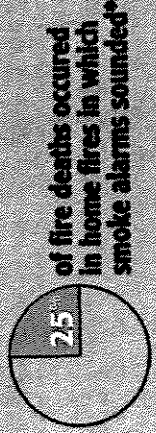
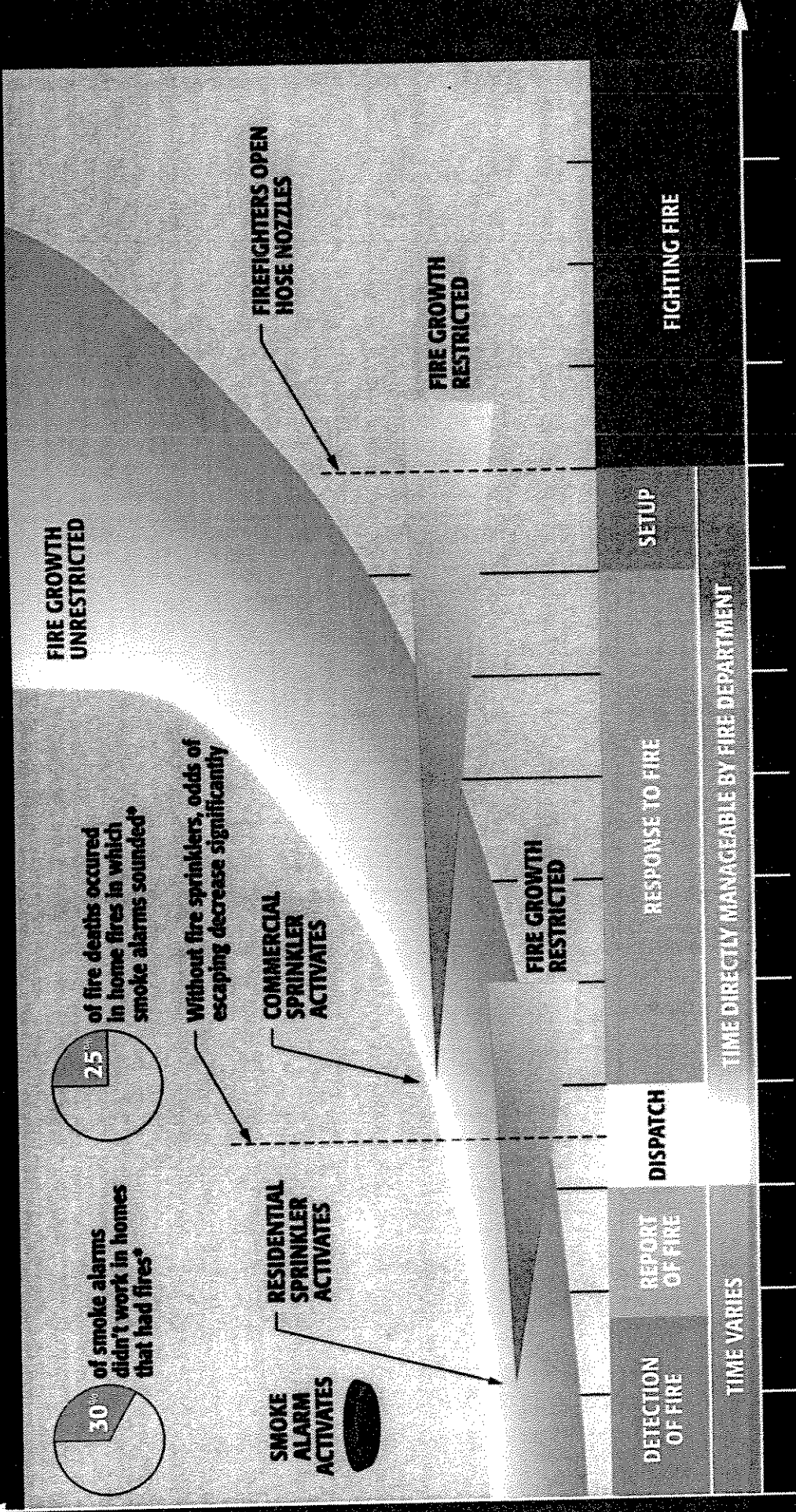


**WITHIN 4 MINUTES, FLASHOVER OCCURRED IN THE ROOM WITH NO
SPRINKLER SYSTEM: NO ONE SURVIVES FLASHOVER**



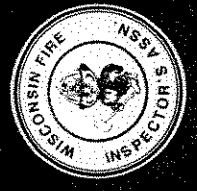
TIME VS. PRODUCTS OF COMBUSTION

FLASHOVER
No one survives flashover



Without fire sprinklers, odds of escaping decrease significantly

TIME (in minutes)
Based upon national averages



The Wisconsin Chapter of
**THE NATIONAL
FIRE SPRINKLER
ASSOCIATION, INC.**



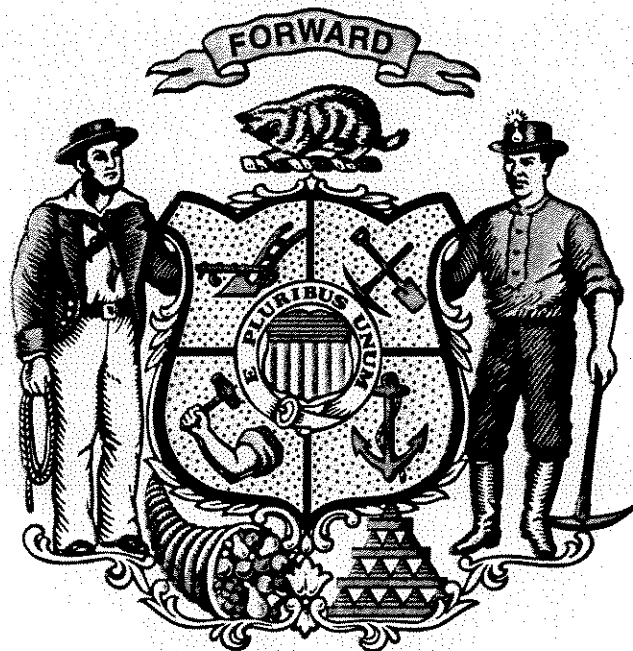
- ACTIONS BEFORE FIRE**
- 1) TEST SMOKE ALARMS
 - 2) CONDUCT FIRE ESCAPE DRILLS

*U.S. Experience With Smoke Alarms and Other Fire Alarms. NFPA. September 2001.

NOTE: See NFPA Fire Protection Handbook for time and temperature information.

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September 6, 2005

Chairman Rob Kreibich and Members,
Assembly Colleges & Universities Committee

RE: AB 544

Dear Chairman Kreibich and Members:

Thank you for the invitation to attend the legislative hearing concerning the pending bill before the Wisconsin legislature mandating fire sprinklers in Greek housing at institutions of higher education in the State of Wisconsin. Unfortunately, the recent catastrophe in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama make my personal attendance impossible.

For those not familiar with the agency I work for, I will provide a brief background. HRH/Kirklin & Co., LLC is a wholly owned subsidiary of Hilb, Rogal & Hobbs, a nationwide insurance brokerage. Our office is based in Omaha, NE. Since 1991, we have been dedicated to serving the insurance and risk management needs of student organizations, with a specific emphasis in Greek organizations. We currently place General Liability insurance for our 120 Greek organizations ranging from national fraternities and sororities to local unaffiliated Greek organizations. In addition, we place property insurance coverage for over 1300 chapter owned or leased properties across the United States through the Fraternal Property Management Association. This represents over \$1 Billion dollars in total insured value.

As a result of the dedication of our agency to this market, we have an in depth knowledge of the risks confronting these organizations and work with them in an effort to reduce the exposure each present. Needless to say, the peril of fire represents a catastrophic exposure in terms of loss of life and property to fraternities and sororities. Last year this was proven when the Alpha Tau Omega chapter house at University of Mississippi experienced a tremendous fire resulting in the loss of three young lives. While we may never know for sure if these lives would have been spared if a fire sprinkler system was in place, we do know:

1. There has never been a death in a fraternity and sorority house which was protected by a fire sprinkler system.
2. Only 11% of fraternity and sorority houses in the United States are protected by a fire sprinkler system.


The easiest way to demonstrate the impact fire sprinklers can have is comparing the ultimate cost of the property damage associated with a fire at a fraternity houses with fire sprinkler systems and those without.

1. The average paid for fire damage to fraternity properties protected by a fire sprinkler is \$78,000 compared to \$238,000 for properties without a fire sprinkler system.
2. In reviewing loss data since 2002, there has never been a fire at a chapter house protected by a fire sprinkler system that exceeded \$250,000 while seven fires at chapter houses not protected by a fire sprinkler system exceed this amount, with three exceeding \$1,000,000 in damages.
3. All fires reported where a fire sprinkler system was present were contained to one room.
4. Sixty-one percent of all fires since 2002 were due to careless smoking or negligent use of a candle. This fact is important to point out. It clearly shows a vast majority of fires in Greek properties are due to human error and occur in a tenant's suite where a fire sprinkler system has the best opportunity to save lives.

Our property insurance program has offered a significant premium discount for Greek properties protected by fire sprinkler systems designed to meet NFPA 13 R installation standards. In 2003, in an effort to encourage more facilities to install fire sprinkler systems, we convinced our underwriter to offer an enhanced discount for newly installed systems. As a result of the agreement, we now offer a Greek organization a discount of 50% of the property premium for two years following the installation of a system. After the first two years, the standard 30% discount is provided annually contingent the system is inspected and serviced on an annual basis.

The enhanced discount has had a material affect on the number of sprinkled Greek properties electing to participate in our program. Prior to 2003, of the 1100 properties that participated, less than 20% were protected by a fire sprinkler system. At the 2005 renewal of our program, the number of insured locations grew to 1300 properties with over 27% qualifying for the discount.

The possibility of saving lives, real property and insurance premiums seem to indicate mandating the installation of fire sprinkler systems the right thing to do. I would, however, do a disservice to my clients if I did not point out that such organizations are not-for-profit entities and the mandates will create a significant financial challenge that many will not be able to overcome. Under the current US Tax Code, a Greek organization's educational foundation can use tax deductible donations to install sprinkler systems in areas deemed to be exclusive educational space. For an example, an Educational Foundation of a Greek organization could use its funds to buy computers, build a multimedia lab and install fire sprinklers in the lab but it could not use these funds to install fire sprinklers in other common areas of the property or tenants' suites. On the other hand, if a university or college doesn't use tax dollars to build dorms and retrofit existing dorms with fire sprinklers, they can use 100% tax deductible donations to meet the financial obligation. Not only does the current tax code discriminate against the largest not-for-profit landlords in the country, it seemingly puts more value on computer hardware, desks and books than the lives of the tenants who will use them.



Our experience with the retro fitting of existing facilities can cost as much as \$50,000 - \$75,000 for a facility with a replacement cost value of \$1,000,000. Assuming a 50% discount in property insurance premium for the first two years and 30% in the third, an organization incurring the expense of retrofitting a building will only realize a savings in property insurance premiums of \$9,650.00. Most Greek organizations purchase liability insurance through a national sponsored program, which requires participation by local affiliates. As such, most insurance companies willing to underwrite the risk will not provide a material premium reduction unless all owned or occupied properties are protected by fire sprinkler systems. This simply means the only savings an organization will realize is a reduction in their property insurance premium.

I encourage any one who deems the necessity to include fraternities and sororities in this bill to also address the issue of how these organizations fund the installation of fire sprinkler systems. This can be done in a variety of ways. Zero interest loans offered through the state, grants from tax dollars paid by our already overburden tax paying citizens or strong lobbying to convince the congressmen, congresswomen and senators of Wisconsin to sign on as supporters of the Collegiate Housing Act, HR Bill 1548 and Senate Bill 713. These proposed bills would allow educational foundations to use donations to improve the fire safety of their entire facilities not only for their areas deemed educational space.

It is a private solution to a public problem. If such mandates are passed without consideration for assistance for fraternities and sororities in funding these costly improvements, it will result in a number of the properties closing. With the current housing shortage on a number of campuses across the country, universities and colleges will not be able to meet the housing needs of the displaced students. This will require they seek housing from private for profit landlords who own properties that are not covered under bills such as the one currently before each of you. These landlords will never make their properties as safe as what we can make Greek housing. This past April, four young lives were lost in privately owned off campus housing and a total of eleven in the 2004-05 academic years, which is validation of the accuracy of this statement. Improving the fire safety in fraternity and sorority houses can only be accomplished through a collective effort to eliminate the uneven playing field with universities by correcting the ludicrous current federal tax code that provides an avenue for Greek organizations to protect their books, desks and computers with tax deductible donations but not the students who use them.

Thank you.

Regards,

Richard Jungman
Manager - Client Services & Claims



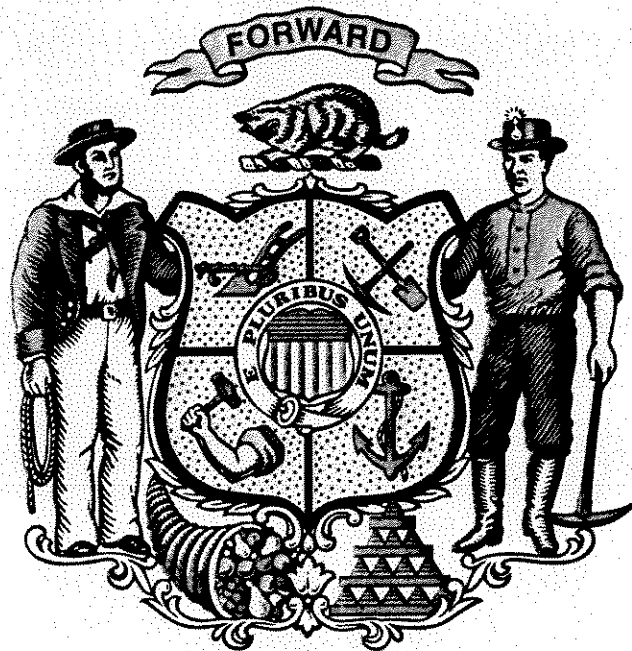
TO: Chairman Rob Kreibich and Members, Assembly Colleges and Universities Committee

FROM: Ray Barrows, Managing Director, Operations

DATE: September 6, 2005

RE: Statement from University Partners, owner Private Residence Halls of Madison

As a private developer and owner of student housing facilities, the safety of our residents is our primary concern. To uphold our mission of providing the highest-quality student housing available, we abide by the nation's most rigid fire-safety regulations at all of our 20 properties. As part of our development or acquisitions process, we install fire sprinklers in all of our communities. We believe sprinklers are a worthwhile expenditure, as they offer not only an additional element of protection for our residents, but also for our structural investment.



Testimony In Support of
Assembly Bill 544

Before the
Assembly Colleges and Universities Committee
September 6, 2005

Good Morning Honorable Legislators.

My name is Mrs. Dana Christmas McCain. I fell victim to a college dormitory fire at Seton Hall University on January 19, 2000. The cause of the fire was arson. As a result, three students perished. Four students were severely burned and more than 50 students were affected by smoke inhalation and other injuries.

The entire Seton Hall Community and indeed the nation learned a valuable lesson that night. The lesson is how important fire safety training and the presence of fire sprinkler systems are in both on and off-campus housing. It literally means the difference between life and death for our future leaders.

Unfortunately, the impact was not great enough due to the lack of sprinkler systems installed throughout our nation's college campuses, whether in dorms or fraternities, sororities or in off-campus housing. Since the tragic fire on January 19, 2000, *75 more* students have died in campus fires. Those who survive live on to tell stories like me. Those who were taken by death left a frightening memory of what will come if we fail to value the lives of our children.

Before I became a survivor, I became a victim. I suffered both second and third degree burns on more than 60% of my body. The key word here is suffered. There is no medication great enough to ease the pain my body endured for more than a year and a half. I simply had to endure the pain. My life was worth living, but at times the pain was never ending.

Once the pain subsided, I am forced to live with the constant reminder of January 19, 2000. I am reminded each time I look in the mirror and wash my face – each day when I get dressed and look over my scarred body. Everyday I am reminded when I place my wig on my head. I will always remember.

If you care about the welfare and well being of your children, yes your children, don't allow the chance for them to suffer the same fate. Now that we are more educated about the ways to better protect ourselves from college campus fires, apply what you have learned.

Would you place the lives of your children in the hands of a university or college that did not value them enough to install sprinkler systems both on and off campus? Would you even take the chance?

If you care about your child's best interest and their continuation of life, this is a topic that deserves immediate attention. I, like so many other suffered. Please do not allow your child and others to suffer the same fate.

Remember, it is you the parent who pays the tuition fees for your children's education. It is you that parent that has prepared them and steered them in this direction. It is you the parent that should be active in learning more about college institutions you are entrusting the lives of your children to. As a child when you are taught the following directions that it is better to be safe than sorry, it is better to be prepared than caught off guard. Let's apply this philosophy to better equipping dormitories and off campus housing with sprinkler systems. In this case it is better to be safe than sorry. These deaths and injuries can be prevented.

Testimony
Wisconsin AB 544
Ed Comeau, Director
Center For Campus Fire Safety
September 6, 2005

Good day Chairman Kreibich and members of the Assembly Colleges & Universities Committee. My name is Ed Comeau. I am the director of the Center for Campus Fire Safety, a non-profit educational and advocacy organization that is devoted to reducing the loss of life from fire at our nation's campuses. I am the publisher of a monthly newsletter, Campus Firewatch, which focuses on campus fire safety issues and the author of the chapter on campus fire safety for the National Fire Protection Association's Fire Protection Handbook. I created and maintain the campus fire safety website for the US Fire Administration and I have produced several student fire safety videos. I am the former chief fire investigator for the National Fire Protection Association and was responsible for overseeing and investigating a number of significant incidents across the globe, including several in residence halls and Greek housing. I have written and presented extensively on the topic of campus fire safety.

Campus fire safety is a serious concern across the nation. Since January, 2000, according to information compiled by the Center, 75 people have died in student housing with 75% of the fatalities occurring in off-campus housing. There have been four common factors in a number of these fatal fires, including:

- A lack of automatic fire sprinklers
- Missing or disabled smoke alarms
- Careless disposal of smoking materials
- Alcohol consumption

The tragic fire at Seton Hall University in 2000 that claimed the lives of three freshmen was a watershed moment and brought campus fire safety to the forefront. Since that time, legislation has been introduced and passed in a number of states and local communities calling for the installation of automatic sprinklers in student housing, among other requirements. This year, four bills focusing on campus fire safety have been introduced in Congress, including one that designates September as Campus Fire Safety Month, and a number of states have also issued similar proclamations. Additional legislation includes the Campus Fire Safety Right-to-Know Act, the College Fire Prevention Act and the Fire Sprinkler Incentive Act.

Testimony
Wisconsin AB 544
Ed Comeau, Director
Center For Campus Fire Safety
September 6, 2005

To address the complex issues of campus fire safety, the Center supports a three-pronged approach that includes:

- Prevention
- Detection
- Suppression

Each of these components is intertwined and is equally important when it comes to developing a comprehensive fire safety strategy. Without any one of them, the strategy will fail.

Prevention involves teaching students what they can do to stop a fire from breaking out, how to protect themselves from fire and what to do if one should occur. Prevention also includes educating parents on how to select a fire-safe school for their children. The federal Campus Fire Safety Right-to-Know Act will call upon schools to report the level of fire safety to the U.S. Department of Education which will be instrumental in helping to create a better-informed consumer when it comes to choosing a school.

Detection is a critical component to alerting the occupants so that they can escape from the building. The detection component also allows the occupants or the fire alarm system to notify the fire department so that it can begin responding as soon as possible.

The final component is that of Suppression and there are several methods by which the fire can be extinguished.

The occupants can use a fire extinguisher, but only if the fire is relatively small-no larger than a wastebasket. This also relies on the occupants already knowing how to use a fire extinguisher and one being readily available and in working order. Since this method depends upon human behavior that includes training, preparedness and ability, it can be a somewhat unreliable and unpredictable method.

Another method of manual suppression is by the fire department. Fire departments are well trained, equipped and prepared to extinguish a fire and do so many times each day. However, an important consideration is that it takes time for any fire department to respond. The fire must first be detected and the alarm sounded. Then the call has to be made to 911, the fire fighters have to respond to the alarm and start the fire attack. From the time that the fire breaks out until water is actually applied to the fire can be 10, 15, 20 minutes or more. During this time the fire is

Testimony
Wisconsin AB 544
Ed Comeau, Director
Center For Campus Fire Safety
September 6, 2005

growing and endangering the occupants and destroying the building. For a high-rise building, this window of time can be even longer because of the efforts needed to reach a fire burning many stories above the ground.

Automatic suppression by a fire sprinkler system is one of the most effective methods of controlling a fire. A sprinkler system does not rely upon any human intervention and it will put water onto the fire, either controlling it or extinguishing it, within minutes if not seconds. Smoke inhalation is the leading cause of fire fatalities, and when the fire is extinguished, smoke production stops. When the fire is extinguished, the danger to the occupants is eliminated.

Fire fighter safety is significantly improved in a sprinklered building because they no longer need to enter a building that is on fire to rescue the victims and extinguish the fire. Quite simply, fire fighters do not have to place their lives on the line in a sprinklered building.

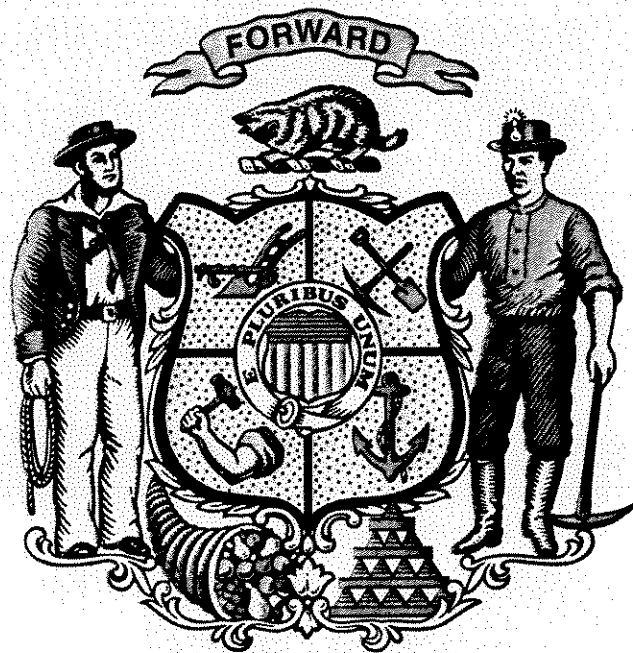
Parents rarely, if ever, think about fire safety when selecting a school. When it is brought up, they often assume that the residence halls are sprinklered and that the schools are doing the best possible to protect their children.

Sadly, this is often not the case. Because of the horrific fatal hotel fires in Las Vegas in the 1980s, the hospitality industry launched an aggressive program to equip their properties with sprinkler systems and state-of-the-art fire alarm systems. In many cases, the traveling public is better protected than students living in residence halls across the country.

I have seen, firsthand, the results of fatal fires. I have talked with the parents that have lost children in fires. I have spoken with survivors of fires. What we are discussing today is not an academic issue of numbers or statistics. What we are talking about is protecting our children, our future. I cannot imagine a greater loss than the death of one of my sons, especially if it was from something that could have been easily prevented.

I strongly urge you to favorably consider the bill before you. Unquestionably, sprinkler systems save lives. Through your action you can play a vital leadership role in protecting the citizens of Wisconsin and joining the growing number of states that recognize the value and importance of sprinklers in saving lives.

Thank you for your attention.



SB 250
MB 544

Alverno College
3400 South 43rd Street
Milwaukee, WI 53234

26 October 2005

Senator Dan Kapanke. Chair
Senate Agriculture and Insurance Commission

I am writing to support legislation to install fire suppression systems in private college and university student residence halls. I would like to share why I strongly urge you to pass this legislation. While Alverno College would be exempt from this current legislation because our residence halls fall below the height requirement, I do want to assure you that our campus will be installing fire sprinklers. Fire safety has been a public priority of mine since assuming the leadership of Alverno last year. Let me tell you the reason why it is a priority for me, and why it should be a priority for us all.

At 4:30 AM on January 19, 2000 I received a phone call that haunts me every day of my life. At the time I was the executive vice president of Seton Hall University in South Orange, NJ. The voice on the other end of the line said only these words: "There is a fire in Boland Hall – get to the South Orange campus immediately."

As I drove the 20 minutes to the campus I listened to my car radio and heard that a small fire had occurred on a third floor common space and that the 700 students had evacuated in fewer than 7 minutes. The announcer stated that there appeared to be no major damage to the building nor to the freshmen who lived in that dorm. I breathed a sigh of relief - until I saw helicopters circling the campus and heard ambulance sirens.

When I ran to meet the president in front of the residence hall he simply looked at me and said quietly: "Three boys are dead and countless others are injured." In fact, three were dead, five were burned on more than 70 per cent of their bodies, and more than 50 others were sent to hospitals with injuries ranging from smoke inhalation to broken bones.

At the end of the day, I walked with the president to family after family who had gathered on that campus. The bodies of the three dead young men were so badly burned they were not able to be positively identified for hours. As the president entered a room to finally share the news with one of the families, the father ran to the president and said: "Father, I know my boy is dead – we have been praying all day. I don't want you to have to say those words." Indeed, the words "your child is dead" should never have to be uttered nor heard by anyone, but most especially when such a tragedy can be prevented.

The building where the fire took place is fire proof and met every code. There was no major damage to that building. It had an alarm system that functioned, fire drills were held on a regular basis, and the students evacuated the building in record speed; but, there

were no sprinklers in that building. In fact, it was the only residence hall on that campus without sprinklers. It was built in the 1950's and sprinklers were not required. But they were certainly needed. The fact that the university was in full compliance with every fire code gives no comfort to anyone, most especially to the families of those young men.

Today you will vote on a bill that I ask you to support. I had hoped the bill would provide for all residence halls, not just those above 60 feet in height. The fire I just told you about occurred in a building that would be exempt from this proposed legislation. The residence halls at Alverno College would also be exempt from this bill as proposed, but we will install the sprinklers because it is the right thing for our students. I urge you to consider the more comprehensive legislation that was passed in New Jersey as a result of the fire at Seton Hall University. It is a model that ensures our children's safety. If we cannot keep them safe, then someone else will one day hear those unspeakable words: "Your child is dead." Please don't let that happen in Wisconsin.

Thank you,

Mary J. Meehan, Ph.D.
President