

Whiz Kid

By Reg P. Wydeven
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When I was a kid, I remember loving to go on family trips. We would go to Milwaukee quite often, to either visit the zoo or the museum. However, we never got there too quickly because of my family's notoriously small bladders.

We would stop at least once, and sometimes twice, for breaks. We would typically stop at McDonald's, because there were lots of them, they were always immaculate, plus I could get a bag of cookies.

Because of this, I laughed hysterically at the 'Seinfeld' episode where the cast is stuck in a parking garage and Jerry desperately has to go to the bathroom. Taking Kramer's poor advice, Jerry elects to urinate behind a car and is promptly busted by a security guard.

Trying to talk his way out of a ticket, Jerry explains to the security guard that he has suffered from having a small bladder since he was 11-years-old and has been in and out of hospitals his whole life. Jerry claims that his doctors have told him that when he feels it, he should just go or he could die.

Not buying it, the guard tells Jerry that he doesn't care if he dies, he only cares about the sanitary condition of the parking facility. Jerry presses on, asserting that if he wouldn't have peed, he would get Uromystitis poisoning and die. He even states that he's been issued a public urination pass by the City because of his condition.

While Jerry's fictitious condition made for a hilarious episode, a new Wisconsin law may be a case of life imitating art.

The new statute requires that retail establishments that have a toilet designated solely for use by employees must permit a person who either suffers from an eligible medical condition or uses an ostomy device to use the toilet. Similar to Jerry's public urination pass, a person wanting to use the restroom under Wisconsin's new law must furnish the establishment with either an identification card issued by a State agency indicating the person suffers from an eligible medical condition or uses an ostomy device, or a statement signed by a physician saying the same thing.

Eligible people can only use the toilet during the establishment's usual business hours and it either doesn't have a toilet designated for the public or they do but it is not immediately accessible. Also, the employee restroom must not be located in an area where access creates a health or safety risk for the person or a security risk for the retail establishment.

While Uromystitis is made up, the statute defines an "eligible medical condition" as irritable bowel syndrome, inflammatory bowel disease, such as Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis, or any other medical condition that periodically requires immediate access to a toilet. An "ostomy device" means a medical device that creates an artificial passage for elimination of body waste, like a colostomy bag.

Establishments that violate the new law are subject to a \$200 fine per occurrence. A person who forges an ID card or doctor's statement, alters an existing one, possesses either of those or tries to use someone else's card or statement could also face a \$200 fine.

So Wisconsin businesses and residents should obey this new law, because if you don't, urine trouble.