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Alexandria may rewrite law to allow breast-feeding in public

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By: [Ben Giles](#) 01/31/11 8:05 PM

Examiner Staff Writer

COMMENTS (1)

Two Alexandria councilmen want to rewrite a local law so that mothers can breast-feed in public and are proposing new rules that would require many private businesses to provide female employees with breaks and a private room so they can express milk while at work.



Lee Vondergrift feeds her five month old son Jake (Photo by Craig Mitchelldyer/Getty Images)

The city's current law, last amended in 1983, says "the showing of the female breast with less than a fully opaque covering of any portion thereof below the top of the nipple" is unlawful, a potential indecent exposure charge for nursing moms.

"It's a symbol of an antiquated way of viewing the role of mothers in society, and we need to fix that," Councilman Rob Krupicka said. "It's difficult for Alexandria to take the position that we want to support moms and then have rules like this in place."

Krupicka and council Vice Chairman Kerry Donley are also proposing a new policy to ensure nursing mothers have enough time at work to pump milk and a designated room for privacy. The policy would match recent amendments to the Fair Labor Standards Act that provide nursing breaks for working mothers, though exceptions would be made for businesses with fewer than 50 employees.

Despite having the indecency law on the books, neither city police nor the commonwealth's attorney in Alexandria could recall a single case in which a woman was cited for breast-feeding in public.

Krupicka said he hopes local employers will follow the city's lead on the issue, citing the health benefits associated with breast-feeding for mothers and their children. According to the Center for Disease Control, research has linked breast-feeding with preventing childhood obesity.

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