

SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATOR KARA HAHN



FIFTH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

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**PRESS RELEASE**

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For Immediate Release

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**New Suffolk Bill to Help Consumers Avoid  
Being Taken to the Cleaners by the Term ‘Organic’**

*Legislator Hahn wins approval for policy preventing usage of an unclear, and potentially misleading, word in dry cleaning advertising and signage.*

**Hauppauge, NY** – Dry cleaners in Suffolk will soon be prohibited from using the unregulated word “organic” to describe the solvents or methods used in providing their services. This comes after the Legislature approved an initiative to regulate the term during its meeting yesterday. Under the bill sponsored by the Legislature’s Majority Leader Kara Hahn (D-Setauket), no professional garment cleaning establishment operating in the county will be allowed to describe its services as “organic” in advertising or signage. Violators will face a \$500 fine for the first offense and \$1,000 for each subsequent offense.

The term organic is found in many industries, including dry cleaning, and has come under increased public scrutiny as regulators have not established clear criteria governing the word’s usage in consumer goods and services. Suffolk’s bill will be nullified should a standard be adopted by State or Federal regulatory agencies.

“A consumer chooses an “organic” cleaning method with the belief that this option is better for his or her health and our environment,” said Legislator Hahn. “Without a universally accepted definition of what constitutes organic services, consumers go through the wringer

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when making their decisions based upon subjective standards that, in some cases, can be completely contrary to their intentions.”

According to the bill, one of the most harmful chemicals used in the dry cleaning industry, perchloroethylene, contains carbon molecules which is an naturally occurring element and therefore is sometimes advertised as being organic, despite its detriment to the environment.

“In some instances there is a significant disconnect between the term organic that has become part of the vernacular and the scientific definition used by industry,” Legislator Hahn continued. “I want to ensure that Suffolk consumers are making decisions based on intention rather than semantics.”

“It is very important that customers understand terms used in dry cleaning advertisements. Organic in this context is a technical term, and does not mean chemical-free. This legislation in Suffolk County helps address possible confusion,” said Beth Fiteni, owner of Green Inside and Out, an advocacy organization committed to empowering the public to find healthier alternatives to common toxins.

The bill now goes to County Executive Steve Bellone for his signature. Once signed, cleaners will have approximately 60 day to come into compliance.

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