

Rep. Hebl: Assembly Republicans move to repeal anti-pollution law

Posted on Monday, Nov 6, 2017

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(MADISON) – Gary Hebl (D-Sun Prairie) today addressed the Assembly passage of AB 499, a bill that would eliminate environmental safeguards against mining pollution.

“This is yet another in a long line of attacks on Wisconsin’s proud environmental legacy over the last 6-plus years,” Hebl said. “There is no other way to put it: this is favoring mining companies over the health of our state.”

Hebl said that the Republican claim that this is a “jobs” bill is farcical.

“It’s a misguided effort to try to bring jobs to the state,” Hebl continued. “Even after further lowering environmental standards, there is no guarantee of sustainable jobs or economic growth. Mining companies could set up shop for a couple years, get what they need while poisoning groundwater with tainted drainage, then pack up and leave the state.”

Hebl pointed to the now-closed Flambeau mine in Ladysmith as an example of mining pollution.

“The Flambeau mine ceased operating nearly twenty years ago, yet there is evidence that the waters around it are still polluted, directly linked to mining operations,” Hebl said. “If this bill becomes law, it could lead to pollution for generations. Our grandchildren’s children could still be cleaning up after us.”

The original bill that set up the environmental safeguards said that a mine cannot operate unless they can prove the operations will not pollute the water supply.

“What we debated last night was not a jobs bill,” Hebl finished. “It was the repeal of an anti-pollution bill. This is extremely bad policy and all I can hope for at this point is that my colleagues in the State Senate understand this and let the bill die in their chamber.”