

Sen. Cowles: Bill to address lead laden water one of six Cowles' bills to clear Assembly

Posted on Friday, Nov 10, 2017

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CONTACT: Senator Robert Cowles, (920) 660-0615

MADISON- A bill to address lead laden drinking water was one of six bills which Senator Robert Cowles (R-Green Bay) authored that passed the Assembly during today's floor session. Senate Bill 48, named the Leading on Lead Act, was one of the key proposals that saw Assembly approval.

"The Leading on Lead Act addresses the public health concerns that thousands of Wisconsin citizens, especially children are faced with every day from lead laden drinking water. Recognizing that each community is different and a one-size fits all solution will not work, the local control provided by this bill will help us to remove this aging, harmful water infrastructure. I am disappointed the Assembly was unable to concur with the unanimous decision of the Senate, but am optimistic that SB 48 will be passed in early 2018. I'd like to thank my co-author, Representative Thiesfeldt (R-Fond du Lac), for his work to bring this bill to the floor."

The Leading on Lead Act provides a funding mechanism for communities to address lead contamination in drinking water by replacing lead laterals. The Senate passed this bill by a 33-0 vote during a floor period on October 31st. As a result of conflicting Senate and Assembly amendments, the version passed by the Assembly was messaged back to the Senate and is available for scheduling.

Cowles also passed a bill through the Assembly to protect the health and safety of state park's visitors by upgrading degraded water infrastructure. Senate Bill 421, named the Parks Revitalization Act, was passed by the Senate on a voice vote on

October 31st. This bill uses up to \$4.5 million in unspent Stewardship funds from the prior fiscal year to complete critical water infrastructure projects in some of the most frequented state parks.

“The Parks Revitalization Act is designed to tackle the ongoing issue of degrading water infrastructure in some of our most visited parks. Good drinking water quality should not be optional when it comes to the health and safety of our visitors. By addressing the critical water infrastructure projects identified by the DNR, we can continue to ensure that our state park visitors have an enjoyable outdoors experience and continue to use our parks. I’d like to thank my co-author, Representative Tusler (R-Harrison), for his work on this bill.”

Another Cowles’ bill passed by the Assembly reforms brownfields regulations to ensure that more brownfield sites are redeveloped. Senate Bill 173 was passed by the Senate on a 33-0 vote during a floor period on November 7th. This bill makes regulatory changes to ensure that more abandoned and contaminated industrial properties are redeveloped through a series of new tools for our local governments and developers.

“Brownfields are a huge impediment in economic development. These properties present economic, environmental, public health and social challenges to hundreds of Wisconsin communities. While development on these properties is prioritized, our current regulatory structure too often hinders redevelopment. SB 173 will remove some of the hurdles faced by local governments and developers, and will turn more blighted properties into productive developments that benefit the entire community. I’d like to thank my co-author, Representative Jacque (R-DePere), for his work on this bill.”

The Assembly also passed AB 422, authored by Senator Cowles, to close the gaps in the current transitional jobs program for veterans by creating the Hire Heroes program. Instead of only allowing participation by veterans with children or veterans between the ages of 18 to 24 as the current program does, this bill makes all veterans eligible for transitional jobs assistance with preference given to those who need it most.

“For many veterans, one of the hardest parts of transitioning from military service to civilian life is finding gainful employment. Wisconsin has a long tradition of serving those who have served their country, and by closing the gaps in the current transitional jobs program, we can continue serving our veterans. By giving all

veterans a chance to get their foot in the door with a potential employer, we can ensure that employers see the value that veterans bring to a workplace. I'd like to thank my co-authors, Representatives Horlacher (R-Mukwonago) and Riemer (D-Milwaukee), for their work on this bill."

Senator Cowles is also the Senate author of two other proposals that passed the Assembly today, including:

- AB 381, which allows the Law Enforcement Memorial Fund (LEMF) to collect annual voluntary payments on the already existent LEMF specialized license plates. This bill, which was co-authored by Representative Steffen (R-Green Bay), will now be heard by the Senate Committee on Transportation and Veterans Affairs.
- AB 538, which aligns Wisconsin's emergency detention law with federal requirements for patients with a mental health crisis. This bill, which was co-authored by Representative Jagler (R-Watertown), will now be heard by the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services.