

Sen. Cowles: Senate responds to public health concerns with bill to address lead laden water

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MADISON- Senator Robert Cowles (R-Green Bay) released the following statement after 2017 Senate Bill 48, authored by Senator Cowles and named the Leading on Lead Act, was unanimously passed by the Senate:

“Time after time, government has responded to major public health concerns with action. 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. Lead laterals are a significant source of lead contamination in our communities, but many of the impacted homeowners don’t have the means to replace these pipes. Today, the Senate overwhelmingly decided that this shouldn’t prevent Wisconsinites from clean and safe drinking water.

“The Leading on Lead Act recognizes that a one-size fits all solution does not work for Wisconsin. Each community with lead laterals is in a unique situation, as the problems in small communities are different than the problems in large communities. While each community is different, the local control provided by this bill will help us to remove this aging, harmful water infrastructure while addressing one of the largest public health concerns Wisconsin families face.

“I want to thank my co-author, Representative Thiesfeldt (R-Fond du Lac), for his work on this legislation. I hope to see the Leading on Lead Act brought before the Assembly in an upcoming floor session.”

The Leading on Lead Act provides a funding mechanism for communities to address lead contamination in drinking water. This bill is just the latest in a series of government responses to public health concerns which include infrastructure responses such as municipal sewage treatment facilities, water treatment facilities, and landfills. This bill allows a municipal government to pass a resolution to ask the Public Service Commission for the authority to use ratepayer dollars for private property owners to replace their lead service lines. If approved by the PSC, the water utility may provide financial assistance programs in the form of a low or no-interest loan or a grant that does not exceed two-thirds of the project cost. The Leading on Lead Act has strong, bi-partisan support from nearly 60 legislative co-sponsors, and broad support from nearly three dozen interest groups, including local governments, social workers and healthcare officials, business groups, environmental organizations, and more.