

Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters: Legislature begins to address lead in drinking water

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Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters Praises Senate Bill 48, 'Leading on Lead'

MADISON – Today, Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters offered testimony in support of Senate Bill 48, or the “Leading on Lead” bill, at a public hearing in front of the Senate Natural Resources and Energy Committee. The bill, introduced by Committee Chair Sen. Rob Cowles, aims to provide communities new tools to assist homeowners in replacing lead pipes.

Legislative Director Jennifer Giegerich issued the following testimony to the committee:

“We know at least 81 water systems in Wisconsin have tested for unsafe levels of lead. We also know that between 1996 and 2016 more than 200,000 children were diagnosed as being lead-poisoned.

“The threat is real and it can be devastating. Lead – even in the smallest amounts – interferes with the synapses in a child’s brain. This damage manifests as decreased IQ, learning disability, and behavior dysfunction.

“Lead leaches into water via lead water mains, lead laterals, old pipes, solder, and fixtures. The threat increases when municipalities replace pipes on public property and homeowners don’t replace them on their property. That’s because more lead is

released into the drinking water supply when new lead-free pipes are soldered onto older lead pipes. Currently, water utilities have little flexibility to help homeowners replace lead pipes in their homes and on their property.

“This bill would give communities the tools necessary to help get rid of these toxic lead pipes, allowing them to provide greater financial assistance to homeowners replacing them.

“We again thank Senator Cowles for his leadership on this issue and urge members of the committee to support SB 48.”