

Wisconsin Public Interest Research Group: Urges Senate to 'get the lead out'

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MADISON - The State Senate is scheduled to vote today on SB48, a bipartisan bill intended to give communities across Wisconsin more tools to address the issue of lead in drinking water. SB48 would allow water utilities to help pay for removal of lead service lines - the single biggest source of lead contamination of drinking water. The Wisconsin Public Interest Research Group (WISPIRG) urged Senators to pass the bill, citing the urgent need to protect Wisconsin children from lead exposure.

"The health of our children depends on safe drinking water," said WISPIRG Director Peter Skopec. "Facilitating removal of lead service lines is the biggest single step our legislature can take right now to protect our children from lead-laced water."

Service lines are the pipes leading from the water main in the street to homes, daycares, or schools. When these service lines are made of lead, they are the biggest single source of lead contamination of drinking water. There are an estimated 176,000 lead service lines in communities across Wisconsin, but current laws prevent water utilities from fully replacing them.

Lead exposure can irreversibly affect how children learn, grow, and behave. Medical and public health experts agree that no level of exposure is safe for kids. WISPIRG

staff collected hundreds of petition signatures from concerned Wisconsinites and delivered a letter in support of SB48 signed by 130 healthcare professionals to the legislature.

“We owe it to our kids to get the lead out of drinking water,” added Skopec. “Protecting children from lead exposure will require committed, long-term action at every level of government. Passing SB48 would be an important step in the right direction.”

In February, the WISPIRG Foundation’s Get the Lead Out report gave Wisconsin an “F” for failing to protect children from lead exposure through drinking water. Removing lead service lines was among the report’s key recommendations.