

Sen. Cowles: Kenosha breaks ground on first lead lateral replacement under new program

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MADISON– Senator Robert Cowles (R-Green Bay) released the following statement after the City of Kenosha broke ground to remove their first lead lateral under a recently approved program made available through the Leading on Lead Act (2017 Wisconsin Act 137) authored by Senator Cowles and Representative Jeremy Thiesfeldt (R-Fond du Lac):

“With over 160,000 lead service lines scattered throughout the state in communities of all sizes, Wisconsin has a problem with lead laden drinking water. Today, Kenosha took a big step forward in not only ridding their community of lead laterals, but they’ve provided a roadmap for other local governments to use this new tool to remove this aging and harmful infrastructure.

“Kenosha, looking to tackle this public health concern, has taken prompt steps to initiate the state’s first customer-side lead service line replacement program and has broken ground just seven months after the bill was signed into law. City leaders also were able to initiate this program to install new service lines without any rate increase on utility customers.

“While the scope of the problem in each community is different, I hope more local governments will recognize that the local control provided in this program allows

utilities to pursue the plan that's right for their community while making lead laden drinking water a thing of the past for Wisconsinites.

"I'd like to thank Mayor Antaramian, the Kenosha Water Utility including their General Manager Ed St. Peter, my co-author Representative Thiesfeldt and the dozens of supporters of this legislation, the Commissioners and staff at the PSC, and many others for their work on this program."

The PSC notes that an estimated 112 of Wisconsin's 578 drinking water utilities still have utility-owned lead service lines, and an even greater number likely have customer-side service lines that contain lead. The Leading on Lead Act provides a funding mechanism to address this problem by allowing municipal governments to pass an ordinance to ask the Public Service Commission for the authority to use ratepayer dollars for a low or no-interest loan or an up to 50% grant for private property owners to replace their lead service lines.