

Sen. Cowles: PSC approves first plan under new Leading on Lead Act

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MADISON- Senator Robert Cowles (R-Green Bay) released the following statement after the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) approved the City of Kenosha's application to become the first community with a customer-side lead service line replacement program made available under the Leading on Lead Act (2017 Wisconsin Act 137) authored by Senator Cowles and Representative Jeremy Thiesfeldt (R-Fond du Lac) and passed earlier this year:

"Wisconsin has a problem with lead laden drinking water. With over 160,000 lead service lines scattered throughout the state in communities of all sizes, Wisconsin children are endangered by lead at a higher rate than the national average. The new tools created in the Leading on Lead Act help to address the public health concerns that many households are faced with from lead in drinking water.

"With yesterday's approval, Kenosha became the first utility to take advantage of this new program to rid their community of lead water pipes. I'm pleased that not only has Kenosha taken prompt steps to tackle this public health concern, but that utility customers will see no rate increase as this aging and harmful infrastructure will be removed and new service lines are installed.

"I'd like to thank the Commissioners and staff at the PSC, the Kenosha Water Utility including their General Manager Ed St. Peter, and many others for their work on this application's approval. While the scope of the problem in each community is different, the local control provided in this program will allow more utilities to pursue the plan that's right for their community and make lead laden drinking water a thing of the past."

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.