

# WISPIRG: Passage of 'Leading on Lead' Bill a Win for Public Health

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## ***Will Give Communities More Options for Addressing Lead in Drinking Water***

**MADISON** – The State Senate today passed SB48, a bill to allow water utilities to help pay for removal of lead service lines – the top source of lead contamination of drinking water. The “Leading on Lead” bill, introduced last year by Senator Rob Cowles (R-Green Bay) with bipartisan support, already passed the State Assembly and now heads to the Governor’s desk for signing.

“Wisconsin’s kids deserve safe drinking water, free of lead that puts their development at risk,” said Peter Skopec, WISPIRG Director. “Facilitating the removal of lead service lines is the biggest single step decisionmakers can take right now to protect our children from lead-laced water. To be sure, the passage of this bill is an important win for public health – but more action is needed.”

If SB48 is signed by Governor Walker, municipal governments will be allowed to work with water utilities and the Public Service Commission to develop financial assistance programs to help remove lead service lines in their communities. Lead service lines are the pipes leading from the water main in the street to homes, daycares, or schools. There are an estimated 176,000 lead service lines spread across Wisconsin, but current laws prevent water utilities from fully replacing them. “Protecting children from lead exposure will require committed, long-term action at every level of government,” added Skopec. “Passing SB48 is an important step in the right direction. We’re grateful to the sponsors and supporters of this bill, to the hundreds of healthcare professionals who weighed in, and to the thousands of Wisconsinites who contacted their legislators urging action.”

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 in 2017.