

# Evers signs executive order creating 'lead czar'

Posted on Tuesday, Jul 30, 2019

Gov. Tony Evers has signed an executive order creating a "lead czar" to coordinate efforts by state agencies to address the risks of lead contamination in drinking water.

Along with creating the position at the Department of Health Services, the order charges state agencies with informing about and protecting Wisconsinites from health risks associated with drinking lead-tainted water.

Appearing in Kenosha Monday, Evers said there is sometimes a perception that lead-tainted drinking water is an urban issue impacting largely cities such as Milwaukee. But those at the news conference stressed the five counties with the most number of lead laterals include Marathon and Manitowoc.

"We all know this is going to take a huge, collaborative effort to make sure everyone can drink clean water from their tap," Evers said during a ceremony at a Kenosha childcare center.

**>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

Evers said the \$32 million included in the budget signed earlier this month was just a "down payment" toward addressing the issue. He also backed standalone legislation from Sen. LaTonya Johnson, D-Milwaukee, that would approve an additional \$40 million in bonding to cover forgivable loans to help cover the costs of replacing lead service lines.

Evers included a similar provision in the state budget, but Republicans pulled it from the bill.

A spokeswoman for Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, R-Rochester, was dismissive of

the gov's move, noting the speaker's Task Force on Water Quality is working on policy recommendations. Kit Beyer also pointed out communities such as Madison have taken their own initiative to address lead laterals and Republicans created a program in the last session to help property owners through their water utilities to replace lead service lines.

The GOP plan, approved last session, allows municipalities to ask the PSC's permission to use ratepayer dollars for low- or no-cost loans or grants to replace lead service lines.

"Legislative Republicans have been working on this issue for years," Beyer said. "After six months in office, the governor has come up with a PR position. This move is more about politics than anything else."

See Johnson's bill:

<https://www.wispolitics.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/190729Johnson.pdf>