

# Rep. Shankland: Introduces clean water legislation

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MADISON – Today, Rep. Katrina Shankland (D-Stevens Point) introduced legislation to create a first of its kind state private well testing program and dramatically expand funding for homeowners to remediate their contaminated wells. This legislation creates a private well testing grant program for local governments to assist homeowners in testing their wells. The bill significantly expands access to grants for homeowners with documented well contamination to remediate their well and access clean drinking water by removing barriers to accessing the Well Compensation Grant Program.

“Everyone deserves access to clean and safe drinking water. It is vital to our quality of life and public health,” said Rep. Shankland. “But across the state, families are buying bottled water because of their contaminated wells. The *New York Times* called Wisconsin’s private well contamination crisis ‘Rural America’s Own Private Flint.’ We must address this urgent public health crisis.”

“With roughly four in ten households in Wisconsin relying on private wells, we must do more to ensure people are testing their wells and acting to remediate their contaminated wells. Recently, it was revealed that of the 301 wells tested in Grant, Iowa, and Lafayette Counties, 42% did not meet the health standards for nitrates or bacteria. In the Central Sands, a recent well sampling in the towns of Armenia and Port Edwards demonstrated that 42% of wells tested for nitrate above 10 mg/L, the federal health standard, and 25% of the wells were above 20 mg/L. In the village of Nelsonville, 47% of the wells tested for nitrates above the health standard.”

Rep. Shankland's bill, LRB 1197, provides \$1 million biennially for the DNR to administer a private well testing grant program in collaboration with local governments to test private wells and map hot spots of contamination. The bill also expands income eligibility and grant awards through the Well Compensation Grant Program, which helps homeowners replace, reconstruct, and treat their contaminated wells. Under the bill, homeowners with wells contaminated by nitrates would no longer be required to own livestock to be eligible for the grant program, and homeowners with nitrate-contaminated wells testing at 20 mg/L and above would be eligible, removing barriers to access the grant program.

"Incentivizing well testing and increasing eligibility for well compensation grants are significant yet simple steps we can take to recognize the problem our state is facing with access to clean water," continued Rep. Shankland. "This legislation will empower homeowners to monitor their private wells, remediate contaminated wells to gain access to drinking water, and work with their communities to identify solutions to contamination sources. We all deserve access to clean and safe drinking water, and this bill will provide immediate relief to the people of rural Wisconsin."