

Wisconsin Conservation Voters: Fate of clean drinking water is in Joint Finance Committee vote

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MADISON - Wisconsin Conservation Voters is calling on the members of the Joint Committee on Finance (JFC) today to approve changes to the Environmental Improvement Fund (Paper #295) in the proposed state budget.

The budget item includes funding for two critical programs that will have profound impacts on the ability for communities across the state to provide clean water to their residents.

In his proposed budget, Gov. Tony Evers recommends increasing funding for the two programs and increasing loan terms from 20 to 30 years in accordance with a change in U.S. Environmental Protection Agency policy.

The EPA announced last week it would provide Wisconsin with \$61.7 million to fund improvements to water and wastewater infrastructure through the state's Environmental Improvement Fund, which includes the Clean Water Fund Program and the Safe Drinking Water Loan Program.

The programs offer revolving and low-interest loans to communities with water infrastructure needs such as aging pipes and deteriorating wastewater treatment facilities.

Executive Director Kerry Schumann said this of the approaching vote:

"The governor declared 2019 the Year of Clean Drinking Water in Wisconsin. Speaker Robin Vos formed a Water Quality Task Force. Both parties accept there is

a problem and they're at the table. More than that, families are suffering. Children are suffering. The JFC just rejected bonding that would have saved thousands of kids from drinking water that's laced with lead. This is a chance for the committee to do the right thing for their constituents and approve these common sense items in the budget. Our drinking water infrastructure is collapsing around us. These loan programs give communities the ability to fix their specific problems. With tight municipal budgets, communities can't afford to take on high-interest debt. Without improvements, these problems will worsen and eventually lead to catastrophic failures. This is Wisconsin's moment to reclaim and restore our drinking water and our health. The members of the JFC hold that responsibility to our future in their hands today."

For more information

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