

Rep. Allen: Assembly votes to protect your pier

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The Wisconsin State Assembly voted Thursday to statutorily clarify the circumstances where someone may place a pier in a navigable waterway.

The legislation creates a general presumption that riparian rights apply to a property owner whose land abuts any navigable waterway, not just natural lakes and rivers, and thus may be able to place a pier. The bill does not modify current deeds, contracts, or responsibilities under federal law which some utility companies are required to follow.

“For 140 years, Wisconsin courts have recognized that all waterfront property owners have a right to place a pier,” said Tom Larson of the Wisconsin Realtors Association. “AB 551 creates a statutory protection for waterfront property owners to ensure that courts cannot take those pier rights away.”

The bill also assists parties in real estate transactions by requiring a prospective seller to disclose whether they are aware of written agreements affecting riparian rights related to the property and whether the land under the body of water is owned by a hydroelectric operator.

“If you have a pier, you should be able to keep your pier. Waterfront usage can substantially impact the value of property,” said Rep. Allen. “This bill will solidify waterfront property values state-wide.”