

Rep. Shankland: Introduces “Clean Water Fund for Our Future”

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MADISON – Rep. Katrina Shankland (D-Stevens Point) and a bipartisan group of legislators introduced a bill (LRB-4534) to create a new state trust fund for clean water initiatives, called the “Clean Water Fund for Our Future.” Under the bill, the legislature would transfer \$10 million in General Purpose Revenue biennially to the clean water fund to be used exclusively for water quality initiatives. The funds would be barred from being transferred to another account for other purposes, unless the rainy day fund is completely expended.

The clean water fund also includes a rapid response fund for the use of urgent environmental, natural disaster, or health issues in need of reimbursement. Under the bill, the Department of Natural Resources and Department of Justice would be able to claw back the funds expended from the rapid response fund, if the contamination being addressed was caused by an individual or company. The bill also includes strong oversight from a new state committee called the Joint Committee for the Oversight of the Water Fund for Our Future.

Rep. Shankland issued the following statement on this legislation:

“Every single person in Wisconsin deserves to drink clean and safe water from their tap, and we have a lot of work to do if we want to make that our reality. This clean water fund will help us ensure that the money is there when we need it. States like Minnesota have had tremendous success with their clean water fund, which protects their groundwater, lakes, rivers, and streams. This summer, Ohio established a new water fund called H2Ohio. While this idea is modest in comparison, it’s a starting point to encourage discussion among legislators so we can build consensus and work together on such a vital issue. I am committed to establishing a clean water fund for our future, and for the future of everyone in

Wisconsin.”

“As I traveled the state in my role as Vice Chair of the Water Quality Task Force, it became exceedingly clear that Wisconsin needs a stronger financial foundation to support folks with contaminated water. We heard from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the Minnesota Geological Survey about how their clean water fund supports statewide efforts. As we crafted our recommendations in the task force report, we noted the need for a long-term funding solution. Wisconsin needs a long-term strategy to fund remediation, prevention, and enforcement efforts so that taxpayers aren’t on the hook for cleanup costs. I am excited that this bill puts us on the path forward to establishing a sustainable funding source while recouping the cost of cleanup from those who caused the contamination. I’m proud to introduce this legislation with the support of colleagues from both sides of the aisle, and I look forward to having many conversations about this legislation and the need for a clean water fund for our future.”