

Rep. Krug: To introduce a second “Mill Bill” for area Paper Mills

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ROME – Representative Scott Krug (R-Nekoosa) announces that he will be introducing a second bill to provide assistance towards the reestablishment of papermaking at the former paper mills in Wisconsin Rapids and Park Falls.

“Everyone in our communities was deeply disappointed when Governor Evers vetoed our first attempt at this in July,” said Rep. Krug, commenting on Evers’ veto of 2021 AB 367 on July 8. “We need these mills to reopen, and for that to happen, we need these mills to find new owners. We’ll give Governor Evers another chance to recognize the struggles ongoing in our Northern communities. We won’t give up.”

On Wednesday October 27, Rep. Krug and several other lawmakers announced a new package aimed at providing assistance towards the sale of the mills in Wisconsin Rapids and Park Falls. “We didn’t give up,” Rep. Krug noted. “The new bill has some new provisions. They’re very measured proposals. They’re something I hope we can present to the Governor very soon.”

The new proposal is known temporarily as LRB 5138. The bill is being circulated for co-sponsorship in the legislature, and Rep. Krug notes that he expects a public hearing on the new bill in a very short time.

LRB 5138 has two distinct parts. One part provides some assistance to the mills in Wisconsin Rapids and in Park Falls that is intended to keep both mills viable in anticipation of the future.

LRB 5138 would provide up to \$1 million to keep the Wisconsin Rapids mill in a nearly-operational condition in order to allow time for a sale and reopening to happen using as much existing equipment as possible. Under the bill, \$1 million in

GPR transferred to the Wisconsin Economist Development Corporation (WEDC) to make a grant to an eligible recipient.

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The bill would also assist with the reopening of the Park Falls paper mill by providing \$15 million for a loan guarantee to secure financing to reopen Park Falls. The loan guarantee would come from GPR funds transferred to WEDC. If the guarantee is not in place by June 30, 2023, the funds go back to the general fund. If the guarantee is in place, the funds would go back to the general fund when the loan terms are complete.

The second part of the bill deals with substance abuse prevention on transportation and public utility projects. These provisions stem from discussions held during deliberations on the 2021-23 state budget bill, which was passed this past summer.

Rep. Krug explains that “These two items are together in one package, in an attempt to garner support for passage of both.”

Rep. Krug reiterated that a public hearing on the new proposal is expected very soon. “I hope everyone with a stake in this situation, will weigh in and state their support for the mills,” said Rep. Krug. “Wisconsin Rapids needs this. Wisconsin’s forests need this. Wisconsin’s timber and tourism industries need this.”

The language of the proposal, as well as a summary prepared by the Wisconsin Legislative Fiscal Bureau, are available and are being sent with this release.