

Rep. Armstrong: Assembly passes environmental rehabilitation TID bill

Posted on Tuesday, Jan 25, 2022

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MADISON, WI – Today the Wisconsin State Assembly unanimously approved legislation coauthored by State Rep. Dave Armstrong (R-Rice Lake) that will make important economic development tools known as environmental rehabilitation tax incremental districts (ERTIDs) more cost-effective.

“Right now, a developer in an ERTID may be compensated for the costs of remediating existing ground, water, or air pollution on a property – in other words, outdoor pollution,” Representative Armstrong explained. “However, many old buildings contain hazardous materials like asbestos, which is notoriously expensive to contain and remove safely, and the current ERTID law doesn’t cover the costs of handling these materials since they’re not currently polluting the environment. The result is that many developers simply won’t do projects that involve demolishing or converting asbestos-ridden structures, and these properties can sit idle for years, deteriorating and blighting the surrounding community.

“Senate Bill 518, which I introduced with State Sen. Robert Cowles, expands the definition of ‘environmental pollution’ for ERTID purposes to include materials – like asbestos or lead – that if released into the environment during the redevelopment of an existing structure could cause harm,” Representative Armstrong said. “By allowing the costs of containing and removing these materials to be covered, our goal is to make redevelopment projects more cost-effective and therefore more attractive to potential developers. This way, more blighted properties can be put to their best use and benefit the community. I’m glad the ERTID bill has received bipartisan support throughout the legislative process.”

The State Senate passed SB 518 on a bipartisan 29-2 vote in October 2021, so today’s Assembly vote means the proposal will now go to Governor Evers for his consideration.

Today’s Assembly floor calendar included many other important proposals as well, including a package of bills intended to improve recruitment and retention of law

enforcement officers at a time when the number of officers in Wisconsin is at its lowest in a decade (just over 13,500). The package, which includes about \$25 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act funding, will now go to the Senate for further consideration.