

River Alliance of Wisconsin: Vote YES to “Clean Water Now” referendums

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Voters in Eau Claire and La Crosse Counties have an opportunity to show their support for better water protection actions and legislation by voting YES to an advisory referendum question on their spring election ballots.

In both counties the referendum question reads: “Should the State of Wisconsin establish a right to clean water to protect human health, the environment, and the diverse cultural and natural heritage of Wisconsin?”

“Voting YES to the question is a way for voters to show they care about protecting clean drinking water from threats like nitrate, lead, and PFAS contamination,” said River Alliance of Wisconsin Water Advocates Organizer Johnson Bridgwater.

“Wisconsin just isn’t Wisconsin without the clean water resources that are essential to healthy families and our healthy economy.”

With the approval of voters, Eau Claire and La Crosse will join more counties in demonstrating bipartisan support for making clean water protection a local and state priority. In the spring 2021 elections, voters in Marquette County (73%), Portage County (77%) and Wood County (76%) approved referendums. Last week, the Monroe County Board approved a resolution on the right to clean water.

Unlike ballot initiatives, the Clean Water Now referendum questions are advisory, or a way for voters to agree or disagree with a statement on their ballots. Approving the referendums won’t make an immediate or direct change to local or state laws, nor will there be a change to local or state budgets. Elected officials can look to advisory referendums to gauge support for future public policies.

“Local communities need help and this referendum is a way to send a message to

state leaders that prioritizing clean water has bipartisan agreement from voters,” said Bridgwater.