

Sen. Marklein: Disappointed in Gov's veto of rural EMS bill

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MADISON – Sen. Howard Marklein (R-Spring Green) made the following statement in response to Governor Tony Evers' veto of Senate Bill (SB) 89 which would have improved recruitment and retention for rural Emergency Medical Services (EMS) by making the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians (NREMT) exam optional.

"I am extremely disappointed that Governor Tony Evers vetoed my bill that would have helped rural EMS with recruitment and retention. I authored this bill with Rep. Travis Tranel (R-Cuba City) because our rural EMS squads told us that they needed some flexibility in order to have enough members to provide services in our small rural communities.

This bill came from direct conversations with rural EMS volunteers in our communities. They told us this is what they needed. The Governor isn't listening to local people and the local volunteers who are working hard to save lives in our communities. I am very disappointed.

The Governor's veto of this bill continues to tie the hands of our small, rural EMS departments. I am frustrated that he decided to listen to the big, urban, paid paramedics instead of our small, rural, volunteer departments.

The Governor said that this bill would lower standards. He is wrong. SB 89 would have made the NREMT exam optional for Emergency Medical Responders (EMRs) so that individual departments would have had the ability to decide whether or not the NREMT exam would still be required for credentialing for their department. But every EMR would still have needed to complete a Department of Health Services (DHS) approved training course and pass all other applicable tests and hands-on

experiences to receive licensure.

I have consistently heard that the NREMT exam is difficult, expensive, and doesn't always test for relevant information. Many departments told me that they would have two, three, or even eight more volunteers if the NREMT exam was not a required part of the initial licensure process. No less than 10 other states, including Minnesota, do not require the NREMT exam for EMRs.

Again, I am very disappointed that the Governor didn't listen to the people who are trying to keep our communities safe and served. I will keep working on this issue, but for now, their hands are still tied."