

**Statement of Todd Ambs Following the Wisconsin State Senate Vote to Reject His  
Nomination to the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board**

**February 20, 2024**

I would like to first of all thank the members of the State Senate who supported my nomination.

Unfortunately, a majority of the Senators did not support my nomination and as a result I now join a growing list of very qualified nominees to a variety of positions in state government who have been rejected for no legitimate reason. Brad Pfaff, Tyler Huebner, Melissa Baldauff, Jim VandenBrook, Sandy Nass, Sharon Adams, Dylan Jennings, Joseph Czarnecki, Dr. Sheldon Wasserman, Jerry Halvorsen, among others, have all been dismissed from their appointments, for purely partisan, petty reasons.

It appears that my transgression is that I “can’t work with Republicans”. That allegation is patently false. They cannot cite a single instance where that has been the case, On the contrary, I have spent more than four decades working in Wisconsin, Ohio and across the nation with members of both parties on a variety of important conservation policy issues. As I mentioned at my last NRB meeting in January, I was honored to have been one of the lead negotiators for the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact, better known as the Great Lakes Compact at the beginning of this century. Working with both Democratic and Republican appointees from across the Great Lakes region, we succeeded in developing what many consider to be the greatest conservation agreement in North America in this century.

And that bipartisan work continues to this day. I just completed a two-year term as Chair of the Great Lakes Commission, an international compact commission created by Congress nearly seventy years ago. I succeeded the Deputy General Counsel for the Republican Governor of Indiana and I was succeeded by the Director of the Ohio DNR, appointed by Governor Dewine.

I know how to work in a bipartisan manner. The majority party in the Wisconsin State Legislature does not. In fact, they seem to think that bipartisan is some sort of lethal virus because they avoid it like the plague. The most significant action taken by the majority part in the legislature in the last five years was when they left town entirely in 2020. Instead of digging in to help Wisconsinites cope with the most significant health crisis on the planet in the last one hundred years, they repeatedly refused to convene special sessions called by the Governor to respond to the COVID crisis and

instead simply left town. Since that time, the Wisconsin Legislature has repeatedly refused to even come to the table to discuss critical issues like health care, education and workforce development, when Governor Evers has requested a special session to address these important topics.

In regard to conservation issues, as the Assistant and Deputy Secretary for the WDNR prior to my retirement at the end of 2021, I had the task of working closely with several of Governor Walker's appointees to the Natural Resources Board. I have never spoken publicly about those interactions since former board members Fred Prehn and Greg Kazmierski took the unprecedented step of registering in opposition to my appointment to the NRB, I will now break that silence.

Can't work with members of the other party? Prehn and Kazmierski were posterchildren for that cause. While serving as chair and vice chair for the NRB, Prehn and Kazmierski presided over a circus like atmosphere as the Board careened from one embarrassing meeting to another.

During my three years working with them I watched as they:

Regularly shilled for the Republican Party and the state's largest business lobby;

Were openly hostile to career state civil servants and belittled average citizens testifying before the board;

Were both patronizing and condescending to women, tribal members and DNR staff; and,

Prehn openly squatted in his position for months after his term expired to prevent a Democratically appointed woman from taking her seat on the Board.

Meanwhile, some people are now trying to build a narrative around my "inability to work with others" because they can't challenge my qualifications. And they don't like the fact that I have spent my career working on behalf of our natural resources -- enforcing the laws that protect those natural resources and zealously guarding against efforts to weaken protections for our land, air and water..

In short, the majority party in the Wisconsin State Senate has made a mockery of the confirmation process and in turn diminishes the institution that purport to serve.

Despite the vote today, I will continue my public service work. It is what I do. I have devoted my life to public service, as did my father and his father before him.

I am proud of the many shining examples of bipartisan success that I have been able to play a small part in over the past four decades.

I will not allow that record to be tarnished by the actions of the State Senate today.