

Has State Senator Rob Cowles Gone Missing?

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Wells in Kewaunee County are unsafe for drinking, the cost of electricity is up, citizens across the state are increasingly concerned about the lack of funding for our public schools, and after 34 years in Madison not a peep from our senator.

WITTENBERG, WI - **Robert Cowles** is chair of the Natural Resources and Energy committee in the state senate. He is the senior Republican in the senate. You would think his 34 years in Madison would make him easily recognizable in the rest of the state. But he seems to have gone missing.

A recent audit by the state Legislative Audit Bureau found our DNR failed to follow their policies on enforcement of water regulations more than 94% of the time in the last ten years. Among other problems this has led to 1/3 of the wells in Kewaunee County found to be unsafe for drinking. The state ignored the problem for so long that residents of the county pushed for EPA involvement. This summer the EPA and our DNR issued suggestions for new regulations on manure spreading in the county. Those suggestions were sent by the governor to a major dairy lobby which sent back their own regulations. Those were then accepted by the DNR. No action from our missing senator. Poisoned wells are apparently not a priority. Maybe it is not his fault, he has only been chair of the Natural Resources committee for a few years.

But he has been on the Energy committee since 2009. For the past two months state media has been talking about potential problems with the cost of electricity in Wisconsin. It seems for the past 15 years the growth in the electrical rates in Wisconsin has been the highest in the region. Some Wisconsin companies are charged 25% more for their power than regional averages. Wisconsin now has the highest electrical rates in the Midwest. There is the potential here for major companies to pull all or part of their business out of the state. This would devastate our economy. Again, nothing from our missing senator.

Citizens across the state are increasingly concerned about the lack of funding for our public schools. People are beginning to question the reason for vouchers in the first place when studies show no improvement in test scores in voucher schools compared to public schools. The loss of public tax dollars to voucher schools in the state is becoming more and more of a problem for local school districts. District after district is being forced to go to referendum to keep their local schools open. Not a peep from our senator. Is that maybe because he has supported spending public tax dollars on private schools every step of the way?

Is he missing or just hiding? With the election less than a month away maybe he feels he has nothing to lose by hiding. Strange that someone with 34 years in state government would feel vulnerable, would not feel comfortable standing on their record, would be afraid to stand up for the people of Wisconsin.

I feel very comfortable with my record. I am a Vietnam veteran, earned a Master's degree in education, taught in Shawano county schools for 31 years, and have spent the last 10 years working in health care. Maybe we should quit looking for what is missing and simply find a new state senator.

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