

Water Pollution Notification Act Receives Public Hearing

Written by Wisconsin Senate Democrats, Kate Constalie

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Shilling/Billings legislation would require DNR to alert county governments when a state pollution violation that may impact drinking water is detected.

MADISON – The Assembly Committee on Environment held a public hearing on a number of pieces of legislation regarding water quality, including Senator Jennifer Shilling (D-La Crosse) and Representative Jill Billings’ (D-La Crosse) proposed Water Pollution Notification Act (AB 700). This bipartisan legislation aims to provide notice to the public of possible contamination that may impact drinking water. If passed, this legislation would require the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to alert county governments within seven business days if a state pollution violation is detected.



“Wisconsin families deserve to know when the water coming from their own wells may be unsafe to drink,” said Sen. Shilling (D-La Crosse). “I’m glad to see this proposal is moving through the legislative process and that we’re one step closer to strengthening clean water protections for our communities. By working with residents, businesses and community leaders, we can ensure fair access to Wisconsin’s groundwater, reduce sources of groundwater pollution and protect the quality of clean drinking water for future generations.”

Sen. Shilling and Rep. Billings drafted this legislation after a case in La Crosse County, where both the county and residents were unaware of a potential risk for over 10 years. A 2016 state

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audit alerted the La Crosse County Health Department to a potential public health hazard when the report found that a facility in the area had exceeded legal nitrogen levels since 2005. After becoming aware of this incident, county officials requested data from the DNR through open records requests. Once confirming the information, the county proceeded to provide outreach to county residents, encouraging them to test their private well systems for any contamination. Of the residents who had their water tested, nearly a third exceeded the maximum contaminant level for nitrates.

Additional information regarding this legislation can be found [here](#).