

Senate Committee on Labor and Regulatory Reform schedule secretive paper ballot vote

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Submitted on behalf of Sustain Rural Wisconsin Network

Mary Dougherty - President

Sustain Rural Wisconsin Network Opposes SB 76/AB 105 'Death By 1,000 Straws' and the Senate's Committee on Labor and Regulatory Reform Secretive Paper Ballot Vote on March 28th

On March 15th, citizens and organizations from around Wisconsin spent more than 9 hours testifying in opposition to SB 76/AB 105. Yet, the Senate Committee on Labor and Regulatory Reform has scheduled a secretive paper ballot vote for SB 76 on March 28th which moves the democratic process from public oversight and places it behind closed doors at the Capitol in Madison.

Brett Healy, president of the Maclver Institute, a conservative think tank, had this to say about paper ballots in a February 13, 2013 Milwaukee Journal Sentinel article, "If it's being used by politicians to avoid questions from the public or the press, that's a concern for everyone in Wisconsin." SRWN believes that secretive paper ballots should not be used for controversial or significant actions like SB 76/AB 105 because it removes a key component of the democratic process: discussion and debate in full view of the citizens of Wisconsin.

SRWN is in opposition to SB 76/AB 105. This bill will cause irreparable damage to Wisconsin's existing lakes, rivers, wetlands, and streams. In addition, it will intensify existing conditions in sensitive resource areas that have been critically damaged due to the over pumping of high capacity wells. This legislation is an attack on the Public Trust Doctrine, which declares that the waters of Wisconsin are held in trust by the Department of Natural Resources for citizens.

The Public Trust Doctrine states that

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the public interest, once primarily interpreted to protect public rights to transportation on navigable waters, has been broadened to include protected public rights to water quality and quantity, recreational activities, and scenic beauty.

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Finally, undue industry influence is driving the fast-tracking of SB 76. The Wisconsin Democracy Campaign states, “Large potato and vegetable growers doled out about \$152,000 in individual and corporate campaign contributions to all legislative and statewide officeholders and candidates in 2016. Most of those contributions were made during the last six months of 2016, and more than half, about \$78,500, came from nine of the Potato and Vegetable Growers Association's officers and board of directors. Most of the contributions to current legislators, about \$126,300, went to Republicans, and \$10,250 went to Democrats.” SRWN is alarmed that the blatant lobbying efforts of agribusiness is putting the waters of Wisconsin at risk.

The following amendments should be considered and acted upon on behalf of Wisconsin citizens:

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Due to the unique geological conditions involved, study and groundwater modeling should incorporate the entire Central Sands region and not the limited areas proposed in SB 76/AB 105.

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Automatic transfer of a high capacity well permit with the sale of property without periodic review is unacceptable. Transfer of land from property owner to another entity which plans to pump in excess of previous records of well pumping or is in a region where high capacity wells are already demonstrating impacts MUST require a periodic review.

Wording that denies a citizen's right to request a contested case hearing MUST be removed in its entirety; this clause is in complete contrast to the democratic process. Citizens should have the right to contest the decision before a permit holder is allowed to operate, based on studies or evidence that shows the potential risks and/or imminent impacts to ground and surface waters.

As Wisconsin residents, we demand that our elected officials enact legislation that will ensure our surface and groundwater will be here for generations to come. We expect them to uphold the Wisconsin State Constitution and oppose any legislation that endangers the Public Trust Doctrine.

We expect our representatives will protect citizen interests over big industry donors who are attempting to buy preferential legislation.

Tags: [citizens ignored](#) , [high capacity well](#) , [Industrial Agriculture](#) , [over pumping](#) , [Public trust doctrine](#) ,
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[AB105](#)