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Bipartisan Support for DNR Independence Bill

Black introduces legislation to let Natural Resources Board pick DNR Secretary

Representative Spencer Black today reintroduced his proposal to restore political independence to the Department of Natural Resources, with a bipartisan list of 30 Assembly and Senate legislators cosponsoring the legislation.

“With the support of a growing number of Republicans and of our new Democratic governor, I am more hopeful than ever that we will restore both the DNR’s independence and our state’s long tradition of nonpartisan stewardship of our natural resources,” Black said.

Black’s proposal would ensure the DNR’s independence by giving a seven-member citizen board the power to hire and fire the department’s secretary. This would restore the department’s nonpartisan status that existed before 1995, when the DNR secretary was made a cabinet position subject to hiring and firing by the Governor.

“Our longstanding tradition of a politically independent conservation agency helped make Wisconsin a national leader in protecting the environment. Unfortunately, politics has too often elbowed science out of the way since 1995, when the DNR Secretary became a political appointee,” Black said.

“Decisions about hunting, fishing, conservation and environmental protection should be based on what is best for the stewardship of our natural resources, not on what is best for politicians,” Black said.

This is the fifth time Black has introduced the DNR independence proposal since 1995, and he said his chances of winning are better than ever.

“We have progressed from no Republican cosponsors and no support from the Governor’s office last session, to Republican supporters in both houses this session and a new Governor who is on record in favor of an independent DNR secretary. The momentum is building to get partisan politics out of the DNR and return to the Aldo Leopold system of conservation that served our state so well for almost 70 years,” Black said.

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