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**PEG LAUTENSCHLAGER**  
**ATTORNEY GENERAL**

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***NEWS RELEASE***

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**LAUTENSCHLAGER SUPPORTS BILL TO RESTORE OFFICE OF  
PUBLIC INTERVENOR IN LETTER TO REP. DUWAYNE JOHNSRUD**

**Attorney General Asks Assembly Committee On Natural Resources Chair To Schedule  
Hearing On Pending Environmental Protection Legislation**

MADISON - Attorney General Peg Lautenschlager today expressed her support for Assembly Bill 46, to restore the Office of the Public Intervenor to the Department of Justice.

She asked Rep. DuWayne Johnsrud, Chair of the Assembly Committee on Natural Resources, to schedule a public hearing on the legislation, now pending before his committee. Lautenschlager's letter was hand delivered to Rep. Johnsrud's office today.

The Office of Public Intervenor was created in 1967 to serve as the public's watchdog over Wisconsin's natural resources. Lautenschlager said that for 30 years the Public Intervenor made significant contributions in protecting local governments' rights in environmental regulation, as well as the rights of private citizens on such issues as property devaluation, well contamination, leaking landfills, and underground storage tanks, among other public interest actions.

Lautenschlager said the Office of the Public Intervenor was also successful in crafting and negotiating the landmark passage of laws regulating drinking water, pesticide restrictions, mining, and right-to-know laws on chemical spills.

( more )

ADD ONE

“I believe the elimination of the Public Intervenor’s office in 1995 was a mistake,” Lautenschlager said. “Although this action was taken under the guise of streamlining government and eliminating duplication, I couldn’t disagree more with the contention by opponents of the Office of the Public Intervenor that these critical environmental issues are being given the same resources or attention today -- they clearly are not.”

Lautenschlager, in her letter, quoted two sources in support of her position. From the Milwaukee Journal:

*“The problem is not that the intervenors are obsolete; it is that they make trouble for those who want to exploit resources unhindered. In other words, they are doing their job too well.” (Feb., 1995, Milwaukee Journal)*

Lautenschlager also said she agrees with former Assembly Speaker and current State Supreme Court Justice David Prosser’s assessment in stating his opposition to the proposed elimination:

*“It seems to me that a rather small amount would be saved by eliminating the office, but a large amount of havoc might be created if they didn’t already exist.” (2/15/95, Appleton Post-Crescent)*

Lautenschlager said her proposal for restoring the Office of the Public Intervenor does not spend any additional GPR dollars. She added, “With a few statutory changes we can achieve both cost savings and improved protection for our environment. I look forward to working with the Legislature to achieve this goal.”

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