



WISCONSIN STATE SENATE

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SENATE COMMITTEE MOVES TO RESTORE DNR AUTONOMY

Legislation Would Reverse Governor's Controversial 1995 Budget Provision

MADISON – The Senate Committee on Environmental Resources voted 5-0 Thursday in favor of SB 3, restoring the authority of the citizens Natural Resources Board to appoint the Secretary of the DNR, a reversal of a controversial 1995 budget provision.

The bill's lead author, Senator Kevin Shibilski (D-Stevens Point) praised the committee's unanimous vote in favor of SB 3.

"This legislation isn't about specific people, its about the process," Shibilski said. "We need to ensure that the decision-making process on natural resources issues has at least some insulation from partisan political battles."

The legislation arose from former Governor Tommy Thompson's 1995 decision to assume authority to directly hire and fire the head of the Department of Natural Resources. Previously, the citizens Natural Resources Board had selected the conservation chief.

Testifying before the Senate committee, Shibilski said that Wisconsin's conservation policy-making had been a model for other states. "Our process has always ensured thoughtful long-range decision-making. Unfortunately, one misguided initiative stripped some of the independence from the DNR. Now we can correct that and again make Wisconsin the conservation leader of the nation."

Senator Shibilski expects the full Senate to address SB 3 in the near future.

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