



Senator Bob Welch

Senator Kevin Shibilski

Wisconsin State Senate

For Immediate Release – July 27, 2001

Contact: Sen. Welch (608) 266-0751

Sen. Shibilski (608) 266-3123

WELCH/SHIBILSKI PROPOSAL TO REGULATE HIGH CAPACITY WELLS INCLUDED IN STATE BUDGET DEAL

Legislators announce bipartisan victory for the environment

MADISON- State Senators Bob Welch (R-Redgranite) and Kevin Shibilski (D-Stevens Point) said new high-capacity well regulations they authored in the state budget would provide significant groundwater protection for Wisconsin residents. The plan, first introduced by Welch and Shibilski in the Joint Committee on Finance, would require the completion of a full environmental impact study and report before a high capacity well permit could be issued for large-scale water extraction intended for bottling and selling.

"People of central Wisconsin spoke loud and clear, and I think this provision will bring this issue to a close," Welch said. "This plan is a common sense solution to a serious problem that both Kevin and I heard a great deal about in our districts."

In addition to requiring Department of Natural Resources regulation of high-capacity wells, the plan requests the Wisconsin Legislative Council to study the issue of the need to amend the statutes to address the impacts of groundwater usage.

"This provision will protect Wisconsin's groundwater and ensure that area residents who could be affected by large-scale water extraction will have their voices heard," Shibilski said. "It is a significant step in safeguarding our water resources."

The Legislative Council Committee created to study this issue would be made up of not only members of the legislature, but public members that have an interest in agriculture, surface water usage, business, and relevant science. Members with relevant science expertise include experts from the United States Geological Survey, the Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey, and the Groundwater Center at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point.

Shibilski added that other water bottling companies will almost certainly be investigating Wisconsin's groundwater and although Perrier has indicated they are moving on---they might return.

Currently, Wisconsin law allows the state to deny a high capacity well on private land only if it is determined the well will adversely affect the public water supply. The Welch/Shibilski proposal will bolster state law by requiring an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) whenever a proposed well would extract water for the purposes of packaging and selling.

The two central Wisconsin State Senators said the original driving force behind this proposal was the Perrier water bottling company's announcement last year that they wanted to drill and extract water in the Mecan Springs Area.

###