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Rep. Katsma and Sen. LeMahieu Protecting Wisconsin's Cemeteries

Madison... State Representative Terry Katsma (R–Oostburg) and State Senator Devin LeMahieu (R–Oostburg) have introduced bipartisan bills in both houses of the Wisconsin Legislature that aim to help cemetery authorities adequately care for their properties.

“This is a straightforward fix that should make an immediate difference throughout Sheboygan County and across the state,” explained Rep. Katsma. “The current regulations that govern this issue just don’t make sense anymore.”

Under current law, funds held by cemetery authorities (primarily associations or churches) may only be deposited with financial institutions such as banks or credit unions. But with interest rates still near historic lows, the interest being generated by these deposits is proving to be insufficient in some instances to pay for cemeteries’ routine care and maintenance. When that happens, public maintenance crews fill the gap—and taxpayers foot the bill.

These bills permit funds to be invested with broker–dealers—subject to “prudent investor” laws—effectively enabling cemetery authorities to improve returns on their investments.

“Fund managers still have the statutory responsibility to invest in appropriately risk-averse portfolios,” said Sen. LeMahieu. “This bill should help local cemeteries make ends meet and remain sustainable for the future.”

“The worst thing we could do is to do nothing,” continued Rep. Katsma. “I’m very encouraged that we already have Democratic support in both the Assembly and Senate and that members of both parties agree that our solution makes sense. I think we can get this passed promptly.”

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Rep. Katsma represents the 26th Assembly District which includes the cities of Sheboygan and Sheboygan Falls; the villages of Adell, Oostburg, Random Lake and Cedar Grove; and the towns of Lima, Holland, Sherman and Wilson. Katsma serves as the Vice-Chair of the Committee on Financial Institutions and as a member of the committees on Consumer Protection, Housing and Real Estate, Ways and Means and Workforce Development.