



STATE REPRESENTATIVE
GARY HEBL
46TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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REP. HEBL SEEKS TO ELIMINATE STATE TRAIL FEES

(MADISON) – Gary Hebl (D-Sun Prairie) has circulated a bill that would eliminate state trail fees. Currently, pedestrians, snowmobilers, and all-terrain vehicle riders do not need to purchase a trail pass to use state trails; bikers, cross country skiers, and horse riders do need passes. Hebl said the measure, LRB-4567/1, is aimed at opening up state trails as places to exercise and to make it easier for those who currently cannot afford to pay for trail passes.

“Wisconsin’s state trails are some of the finest in the country. They are great areas for exercising, but they are closed to people who cannot afford the trail fees. This plan will truly open up the trails to everyone in Wisconsin.”

As a state, Wisconsin has consistently ranked in the top half nationwide for number of obese adults. Obese individuals are at a greater risk of heart disease, bone and joint stress, as well as type 2 diabetes. Hebl said that he wants free trail use to encourage exercise and healthy activities.

“Obesity is an increasing problem in Wisconsin,” Hebl continued. “In 1990, the adult obesity rate was 11.8%. That number rose to 30.7% in 2016. Clearly, we must tackle the issue of increasing obesity in our state by stressing better eating habits and more exercise.”

Hebl also addressed potential concerns that eliminating fees would remove a funding source for maintaining the trails. The DNR estimates that it brings in around \$1.3 million each year from state trail passes, but Hebl said he has an idea of where the money could be made up.

“Since 2011, environmental enforcement measures are way down,” Hebl said. “Total cases brought to judgment by the Wisconsin Department of Justice’s Environmental Protection Unit against environmental violators are down 54% compared to 2000-2010. Because of that, total judgments received from violators are down an average of \$3.8 million per year. A return to stronger enforcement of environmental standards could more than make up for loss of trail fees. It’s an easy solution that would allow Wisconsin citizens full use of state trails.”

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