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Rep. Considine responds to high capacity well vote

Madison – Last night, the majority party in the State Assembly voted to limit oversight of high capacity wells in Wisconsin. SB 76 passed the Assembly on a near-party line vote.

Rep. Dave Considine (D-Baraboo), who represents Devil’s Lake State Park and many other environmental and agricultural resources, strongly objected to this vote. “When we had a public hearing on this bill in March, it was very clear by the hours of citizen testimony that this was a controversial issue,” said Rep. Considine. “I support our agricultural economy, but we also have to be mindful of our environment, and SB 76 does not protect our natural resources.”

SB 76 would exempt high capacity well repairs, reconstructions, replacements, and ownership transfers from any oversight by the state Department of Natural Resources (DNR). This would allow high capacity well owners to continue pumping large amounts of our groundwater into the future without any DNR input or control.

“The DNR is supposed to work to preserve our natural resources,” Rep. Considine stated. “Instead of carefully seeking a way for them to do that while still allowing Wisconsin agriculture to thrive, we’re making a major, sweeping change on an issue that needs much more thorough consideration.

“This is not the right way to handle legislation that has serious consequences on our environmental resources. We heard from a room full of citizens who warned us that this would be complicated, and clearly my colleagues in the majority didn’t listen to them. I hope in the future we can do better.”

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