



Missed Opportunities Overshadow Water Quality Task Force Recommendations

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Madison, WI—The Speaker’s Task Force on Water Quality released a report today outlining its recommendations for addressing Wisconsin’s ongoing drinking water contamination crisis. The report highlights 13 new legislative proposals. According to Midwest Environmental Advocates (MEA), a nonprofit environmental law center that represents the public’s rights to healthy water, land, and air, the proposals do not adequately respond to some of the water quality concerns expressed most frequently by citizens during the Task Force’s public hearings.

“Too many Wisconsinites lack access to safe drinking water. The Speaker’s Task Force on Water Quality represented a real opportunity for legislators to hear directly from Wisconsin families who are living through this public health crisis,” said Tony Wilkin Gibart, executive director of Midwest Environmental Advocates. “While we will continue to evaluate each of the proposals, it is already clear the legislation does not address some of the key issues raised by the public at the Task Force hearings.”

Three of the most frequent and consistent recommendations voiced by citizens throughout the hearing process—increased funding for lead service line replacement, the adoption of state standards for PFAS contamination, and adequate enforcement and regulation of concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs)—were not incorporated into any of the 13 new legislative proposals.

Wilkin Gibart continued, “The Task Force has gathered an incredible amount of information that clearly points to the need for bold and comprehensive action, yet the proposed legislation fails to address some of our most serious water quality challenges. There are no new proposals for dealing with existing PFAS contamination, no new funding for lead lateral replacement, and no additional resources for CAFO oversight and enforcement. Wisconsinites who are living without access to reliable, safe drinking water deserve legislation that devotes significant resources and takes bold steps to protect their health and safety.”

The 13 legislative proposals were scheduled to be released late Wednesday and will be taken up by the legislature in the coming weeks.

“While we will likely be in support of a number of the Task Force’s recommendations, the report shows this was a missed opportunity,” Wilkin Gibart said. “We are disappointed that the Task Force did not adequately respond to the gravity of the public health crisis the state is facing.”

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