A Conservation Review of the 2017-18 Wisconsin Legislature
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Engaging voters to protect Wisconsin’s environment
Table of Contents

Evaluating Your Legislators 1
The Vote Tracker 2
Priority Legislation 4
Conservation Honor/Dishonor Roll 10
Evaluating Your Legislators All Year Round

Thanks to conservation voters like you, this legislative session we began to address the drinking water crisis in Wisconsin, like updating manure management rules and giving communities more tools to eliminate lead pipes. Through your dedication, engagement, and financial support, families across the state have new and important protections that will improve their health and the environment.

In this era of constant attacks on our environmental protections, often a win for the environment means preventing anti-conservation bills from getting to the Senate or Assembly floor for a vote - which leaves no record of legislators who fought to stop the bill. There is often no public record of how legislators voted due to frequent voice votes. And, legislators who champion the environment often can’t even get a hearing or a vote on their bills.

Here’s how we’re handling that. We’ve eliminated the single number score you’re used to seeing in the Conservation Scorecard. Instead, all legislators’ votes on every conservation bill are listed on the Vote Tracker feature on our website at conservationvoters.org/vote-tracker.

In the following pages we give you a deeper look at the biggest things that happened in this legislative session, and, wherever it’s available, give you a vote chart on that bill. We give you a look behind the scenes on the work conservation voters were doing on each issue. And, as always, we give you our Honor and Dishonor Rolls so you can see the best and worst actors.

While it is legislators who ultimately cast the votes that determine Wisconsin’s conservation policies, the real power lies in the hands of voters like you. You determine who makes those decisions. Use this publication and the Vote Tracker to help inform your votes and your efforts as a conservation voter.

Thanks for all you do!
The Vote Tracker: Your Eyes on the Capitol

The Vote Tracker on the Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters website is a powerful tool. From committee votes to bill summaries to actions taken by legislators and the governor, the Vote Tracker serves as your eyes in the State Capitol.
The Vote Tracker is updated in real-time, meaning you can get the information you need when it’s most important – as a bill is moving through the legislative process. It also provides opportunities for you to weigh in on the issues that matter most through petitions, email messages to lawmakers, and more.

To get the most value out of it, check out the following features included in the Vote Tracker:

**Track Your Legislators**
Click on legislators’ names to view how they’ve voted on current legislation and get their contact information. This page also includes links to the bills they voted on as well as links to past conservation scores.

*conservationvoters.org/vote-tracker*

**Bills To Watch**
Click on a specific bill for a summary, link to the full bill, its status, and ways to take action.

An easy to understand icon-based system will guide you to a specific issue area. For example, if you’re concerned about clean water, you can click the water drop. The bills that affect the quality of your water will appear.
Sulfide mining is the most polluting industry in America, responsible for poisoning the environment with a toxic brew of arsenic, asbestos, mercury, sulfuric acid, and much more.

The poisons it releases through acid mine drainage can poison groundwater, turn the surrounding area – including lakes and rivers – into dead zones, and continue seeping into the environment for thousands of years. SB 395 & AB 499 eliminate Wisconsin’s “Prove It First” mining law. That law has protected public health and natural resources for the past 20 years by requiring mining companies to show a demonstrated track record protecting water quality before being granted permits. Given the long-term and guaranteed toxic nature of the waste generated by sulfide mining, it is critical we have a high standard for demonstrating protection of our waters, not less.

Conservation voters worked hard to defeat this terrible bill, writing and meeting with legislators, speaking at public hearings, doing education door-to-door in areas targeted by mining companies, engaging the media, and organizing local elected officials and other constituencies.

While the bill eventually passed, there was bipartisan opposition to it, and it was widely seen as controversial. Since its passing, local communities like Marathon County are passing ordinances to protect against mining’s potentially disastrous environmental effect.

Signed Into Law by Governor Walker
Lead in drinking water is a real crisis in Wisconsin, causing serious health problems - like low IQ, mental illness, and increased violent behavior - for thousands of children and families in Wisconsin. In fact, even a very limited EPA study showed that Wisconsin has over 176,000 lead service lines carrying water to homes and businesses all over the state.

AB 78/SB 48, introduced by Sen. Rob Cowles and Rep. Jeremy Theisfeldt, allows greater flexibility for municipalities to help families replace dangerous lead pipes. When the bill was introduced, bipartisan support was overwhelming in the state legislature, with 55 co-sponsors split almost evenly between Democrats and Republicans. Then the state’s biggest industry lobby group, Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce, came out against the bill, and it came to a screeching halt.

With just two weeks to get AB 78/SB 48 back on track, conservation voters leaped into action, sending over 2,500 emails to their decision makers, signing 247 petitions (in one day!), and making dozens of phone calls to decision makers. Over 100 health and faith professionals and organizations wrote a letter to the legislature, calling for action. Thanks to you and the efforts of our staff, volunteers, and partner organizations, Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce withdrew its opposition, and AB 78/SB 48 was signed into law.
The Foxconn bill was the largest corporate handout Wisconsin has ever seen – and the handouts weren’t just tax dollars. Gov. Walker’s gift to Foxconn rolled back protections for wetlands and local waterways, eliminated the state-level environmental impact statement, and skirted air pollution standards.

And, in an unprecedented betrayal of the core intent of the hard-won, bipartisan Great Lakes Compact, the bill gives away Great Lakes water to Foxconn via the City of Racine – up to seven million gallons per day.

When the bill was first announced, Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters took action quickly, becoming one of the leading voices sounding the alarm about the environmental rollbacks in the Foxconn bill. More than 7,200 conservation voters responded by signing statements and petitions opposing each phase of the Foxconn giveaway.

“It makes no sense that after the over-the-top accommodations already promised to Foxconn, we would allow the company to bypass controls designed to mitigate flood and pollution disasters. It makes no sense from a moral perspective or a financial one.”

John Stollenwerk, former president and CEO of Allen Edmonds Shoe Corp., and a member of the Board of Directors of Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters.

| Pro-Conservation Vote: No |

### The Foxconn Bill
**Aug 2017 SSAB 1**

#### Senate Votes

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#### Assembly Votes

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| Signed Into Law by Governor Walker |
Apparently inspired by the Foxconn rollbacks, Assembly Majority Leader Jim Steineke and Senate President Roger Roth introduced a bill that would have removed protections for a million acres of wetlands.

Wetlands provide critical protections for our water by filtering out pollution and act as sponges that mitigate flooding. They are also critical habitat.

After a very public outcry by conservation and sportsmen groups, including 1,492 emails from conservation voters, legislators began feeling the heat.

Sen. Roth and Rep. Steineke were forced to reduce the scope of the bill, but the final version still leaves thousands of acres unprotected.

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**Dropping State Protections for Wetlands**

**AB 547 / SB 600**

**YES / ANTI-CONSERVATION**

Cowles, Robert
Craig, David
Darling, Alberta
Feyen, Daniel
Fitzgerald, Scott
Kapenga, Chris

LeMahieu, Devin
Marklein, Howard
Moulton, Terry
Nass, Stephen
Olsen, Luther
Petrovski, Jerry

Roth, Roger
Stroebel, Dewey
Testin, Patrick
Tiffany, Thomas
Vukmir, Leah
Wanggaard, Van

**NO / PRO-CONSERVATION**

Bewley, Janet
Carpenter, Tim
Erpenbach, Jon
Hansen, Dave
Johnson, LaTonya

Larson, Chris
Miller, Mark
Ringhand, Janis
Risier, Fred
Schachtner, Patty

Shilling, Jennifer
Taylor, Lena
Vinehout, Kathleen
Wirch, Robert

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**Assembly Votes**

**YES / ANTI-CONSERVATION**

Allen, Scott
August, Tyler
Ballweg, Joan
Bernier, Kathy
Born, Mark
Brantjen, Janel
Brooks, Edward
Brooks, Robert
Duchow, Cindi
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Ott, Jim
Petryk, Warren
Pronschinske, Treig
Quinn, Romaine
Rodriguez, Jesse
Rohrkaste, Mike
Sanfelippo, Joe
Zimmerman, Shannon

**NO / PRO-CONSERVATION**

Anderson, Jimmy
Barca, Peter
Berceau, Terese
Billings, Jill
Bower, David
Brostoff, Jonathan
Considine, Dave
Crowley, David
Doyle, Steve
Fields, Jason
G辽rch, Eric
Goyle, Evan
Hebl, Gary
Horlacher, Cody

Hesselbein, Dianne
Hintz, Gordon
Kessler, Frederick
Kitchens, Joel
Kolstoe, Debra
Meyers, Beth
Milroy, Nick
Neubauer, Greta
Novak, Todd
Ohnstad, Tod
Petersen, Kevin
Pope, Sondy
Riener, Daniel

Sargent, Melissa
Shankland, Katrina
Sinicki, Christine
Spreitzer, Mark
Stuck, Amanda
Subeck, Lisa
Taylor, Chris
Tranel, Travis
Vruwink, Don
Wachs, Dana
Young, Leon
Zamarripa, JoCasta
Zepnick, Josh

**Signed Into Law by Governor Walker**

**NOT VOTING:** Jesse Kremer
Manure in Drinking Water
NR 151

Manure pollution in drinking water is at crisis levels, especially in northeast Wisconsin. The EPA ordered the Department of Natural Resources to address the manure pollution problem. After a long process, a workgroup of citizens, farmers, the DNR, and local officials published findings that made specific recommendations to help remedy manure pollution. It asked the DNR Board to strengthen an administrative rule – called NR 151 – that dictates how manure can be spread on farm fields.

The rule change faced stiff criticism and opposition from Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce (WMC) and the Dairy Business Association (DBA), the state’s agribusiness lobby. When the DNR first proposed the rules, they were supposed to reduce pollution from industrial farms statewide. The DBA met with Governor Walker and convinced him to limit the scope to only the most sensitive areas of Wisconsin where the manure pollution crisis is already widespread, and to focus primarily on small and mid-sized farms.

More than 100 conservation voters packed the NR 151 hearings and significantly outmatched the DBA and WMC. Those organizations only managed four attendees. In total 2,227 conservation voters took 4,451 actions including emails and phone calls to legislators, petition signatures, and asking legislators to commit to clean water. In a huge victory, the DNR Board unanimously approved the rules, and the legislature accepted them through passive review.

Signed Into Law by the DNR Secretary Dan Meyer

Pro-Conservation Vote: Yes
Well Compensation Bill
AB 226 / SB 168

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection estimates that roughly one in five private wells in rural areas of our state have levels of agricultural pollution that make the water unsafe to drink.

AB 226 and SB 168 make it easier for more households to replace the costs of their contaminated wells or failing septic systems by allowing local governments to provide low-cost or no-cost loans to replace these wells and systems.

It also increases the maximum grant amount under the state’s Well Compensation Grant Program to $12,000.

Bacteria contaminated drinking water wells around Wisconsin

Not all bacteria are dangerous, but coliform bacteria can indicate the presence of viruses or other illness-causing pathogens. While municipal water systems test for bacteria, private wells are unregulated. In one study of nearly 4,000 private Wisconsin water wells, 18 percent tested positive for coliform bacteria.

Map: Katie Kowalsky, Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism

Assembly passed by voice vote
Signed into Law by Governor Walker
Conservation Honor Roll

The Conservation Honor Roll recognizes the following legislators for going the extra mile to protect Wisconsin’s natural resources.

Senator Rob Cowles, Senator Latonya Johnson, Representative Jeremy Thiesfeldt, Representative Chris Taylor & Representative Tod Ohnstad

These legislators worked to bring important protections for communities struggling with toxic lead pipes. Sen. Cowles and Rep. Thiesfeldt introduced and helped pass the Leading on Lead Bill (SB 48), Sen. Johnson and Rep. Ohnstad introduced a bill to remove lead from daycares and schools, and Rep. Taylor a bill to ensure county health staff had the authority to test drinking water for lead.

Senator Jennifer Shilling & Representative Jill Billings

Sen. Shilling and Rep. Billings broke new ground in holding polluters accountable while protecting Wisconsinites’ health when they introduced Assembly Bill 881. AB 881 requires the Department of Natural Resources to notify nearby private well owners and municipalities when water pollution exceeds permitted limits and could pose an immediate health risk. Because of Rep. Billings’ and Sen. Shilling’s hard work, AB 881 passed an Assembly committee before the session ran out. We look forward to seeing this policy move forward next year.

Representative Joel Kitchens

Strengthening NR 151 was a critical step in tackling the long-standing crisis of manure in drinking water in northeast Wisconsin. Rep. Joel Kitchens played an unmatched role among legislators in ensuring the passage of the rules. When, at several points along the way, Big Ag groups attempted to stop them, Rep. Kitchens was always there, testifying at hearings, speaking in front of the Natural Resources Board, and pushing for improved manure management.
Conservation Dishonor Roll

Some decision makers will go to extraordinary lengths to jeopardize Wisconsin’s natural resources. The following lawmakers’ actions were so egregious and out of touch with their constituents’ conservation values they belong on the Conservation Dishonor Roll.

**Governor Walker**
Governor Scott Walker went above and beyond a Governor’s typical role in the legislative process when he negotiated behind closed doors with Foxconn and led the charge to roll back protections for wetlands, clean air, and the Great Lakes as part of his massive handout to this foreign company.

To see more of Walker’s anti-conservation record, go to: [http://conservationvoters.org/walkers-wisconsin/](http://conservationvoters.org/walkers-wisconsin/)

**Senator Tom Tiffany**
Once again, Sen. Tom Tiffany appears on the dishonor roll. This time, he worked in concert with out-of-state and foreign mining corporations to bring metallic sulfide mining, America’s most toxic industry, back to Wisconsin with his Industrial Acid Mining Bill. In the process, Sen. Tiffany divided and misrepresented conservation groups and misled local governments. Despite saying the bill would not take away local control, Tiffany has actively threatened local governments with future legislation that would remove their ability to pass strong local protections.

**Representative Ron Tusler**
Rep. Tusler twice offered an amendment to unrelated bills late at night to allow an out-of-state frac sand company, Meteor Timber, to bypass a judicial review challenging the legality of its permit to fill 16 acres of internationally rare wetlands. Ultimately, the Senate rejected both amendments and the court case went forward. A judge found the permit did not protect the environment and invalidated it.
HOW YOUR LEGISLATORS VOTED ON CONSERVATION ISSUES THIS SESSION.