



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 20, 2018

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Sen. Shilling Column: Protect Wisconsin's Conservation Legacy

It is hard not to celebrate Earth Day without a sense of pride. It was, after all, founded by former Wisconsin Governor and U.S. Senator Gaylord Nelson. Created as a day for Americans to recognize environmental issues and promote conservation, the first Earth Day was celebrated on April 22, 1970.

Nelson paved the way for some of the most important environmental protections in Wisconsin and ushered in a new era of progressive stewardship. At a time when few would listen, he knew that our environment was something to be treasured and not taken for granted.

After seeing public frustration over dilapidated state parks, the exploitation of public resources by private industry, and the unchecked pollution of waterways, Nelson took decisive action. As Governor, he created the Department of Natural Resources, established a Youth Conservation Corps, and funded the Outdoor Recreation Action Program to preserve land for public parks and wilderness areas.

A visionary of his time, Nelson knew that economic prosperity didn't have to come at the expense of our clean air, land and water. Unfortunately, a recent report revealed that Wisconsin has dropped as a leader in conservation and many fear our proud history of environmental stewardship is in jeopardy.

Years of Republican policies that roll back environmental protections are having a detrimental impact on our communities and creating an unfair balance between the rights of the public and special interests. Republicans have tipped the scale for corporations at the expense of local residents and communities. Nowhere is this imbalance more obvious than the Republican giveaway to Foxconn, which exempts the corporation from state environmental protections, increases air pollution, and diverts up to 7 million gallons of water a day from Lake Michigan.

Republicans also eliminated vital wetlands protections, increased flooding risks, and compromised water quality. After back-to-back summers of severe flooding across the state, communities need wetlands more than ever to absorb excess flood waters and protect public safety.

With warmer temperatures and summer just around the corner, people from all over will travel to our state parks and beaches to enjoy the scenic outdoors. From hunting and fishing to tourism and recreation, Wisconsin's unique natural beauty is a major driving force behind the success of local communities and sustainable economic opportunities for families. Simply put, clean water, land and air are essential to our way of life.

For our children and grandchildren to enjoy the same opportunities we have, we need to safeguard access to clean water, land and air and prevent special interests from taking unfair advantage of our environment. This Earth Day, Democrats want to continue Gaylord Nelson's legacy. Together, we can protect our quality of life, stop the degradation of our environment and advance policies that ensure a better future for everyone.

Jennifer Shilling serves as the Senate Democratic Leader and represents the 32nd District which covers La Crosse, Vernon, Crawford and parts of Monroe County.

MEDIA NOTE: See email attachment for an official photo of Sen. Shilling.

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