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Sierra Club Denounces Budget Changes

Joint Finance Committee action means Wisconsinites will continue to drink polluted water, pay high energy bills, and lack access to nature, work and school

MADISON - Wisconsin's Budget Committee, known as the Joint Finance Committee, stripped most of Governor Evers' proposals that provide support for climate programs, drinking water programs and more. Specifically, the Joint Finance Committee removed funding for the PFAS action plan, climate programs, energy efficiency, land stewardship, and more. Additionally, the committee removed the proposal to allow local governments to raise funding for transit systems.

In response, Wisconsin Sierra Club Chapter Director Elizabeth Ward issued the following statement:

“Governor Evers proposed a budget that demonstrated leadership by taking action on the things Wisconsinites have been calling for in the past decade: bold climate action, safe drinking water, and access to transit and public lands. The committee’s move today was the opposite of leadership; it moved to keep the status quo in Wisconsin. A status quo where thousands are drinking contaminated water and people who don’t drive can’t get to work and school. A status quo that will cause a climate catastrophe if we do nothing. Given the realities of climate change, the status quo is unacceptable. This decision by the Joint Finance Committee locks Wisconsinites into drinking polluted water, paying higher energy bills, and lacking access to work, school, and public lands.”

The proposals that were stripped from the budget include:

- Establishment of the Office of Sustainability and Clean Energy and the Office of Environmental Justice
- Increased funding for Focus on Energy
- The state’s carbon-free electricity goal
- Consideration of the social cost of carbon
- Changes to the levy limits for local governments
- Repeal of Prohibition of Condemnation Authority for Recreational and Pedestrian Trails
- Funding for county conservation staff
- PFAS action plan and funding
- High capacity well application fees
- Several diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives

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Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America’s oldest, largest, and most influential grassroots environmental organization. The Sierra Club’s mission is to explore, enjoy, and protect the wild places of the earth. The Sierra Club – Wisconsin is made up of 18,000 members and supporters from throughout Wisconsin working to promote clean energy and protect land and water resources.