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46TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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All Wisconsinites Deserve Clean, Safe Drinking Water

By Rep. Gary Hebl

It has now been 17 months since the Federal government declared a state of emergency and residents of Flint, Michigan were instructed to use bottled or filtered water for drinking, bathing, cooking, and cleaning. It was a failure of enormous proportions. It is astonishing that work to correct these contaminated lines will not be completed until 2020 *at the earliest*.

Access to clean water is often taken for granted in our country. However, the Flint water crisis has shown us that even here in the United States of America, in 2017, there is no guarantee of clean, safe drinking water. It shouldn't be this way, but it's happening in our country- and it's happening right here in Wisconsin.

Most residents of Kewaunee County in Northern Wisconsin get their water from wells. Kewaunee County is also home to 16 concentrated animal feeding operations, or CAFOs. Under normal circumstances, manure irrigation and deep soil can help filter out the bacteria from manure run off. However, Kewaunee County's relatively thin top soil leads to problems. Because both the animals they house and the spreading of liquid manure as a fertilizer, the groundwater from CAFOs contaminates residential wells and has led to one-third of wells in Kewaunee County being declared unsafe to use for drinking water because of high levels of fecal matter.

Recently, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources announced that they will be providing bottled water to owners of wells that are likely contaminated. This is a public health crisis happening in Wisconsin right now and it is getting very little press coverage.

Recently, in the Assembly Committee on Environment and Forestry, we had a public hearing regarding [Assembly Bill 226](#), which would permit local governments to take steps to remedy a contaminated well. While this is something that needs to be done, it doesn't fix the underlying issue. Assembly Bill 226 is a Band-Aid and not a cure. We need to take a look at the underlying reasons that groundwater gets contaminated and look for real solutions, such as proper manure irrigation for areas with thin top soil.

It is the right of every Wisconsinite to have access to clean, safe drinking water. It is unconscionable that in 2017 there are residents of our state that have to depend on bottled water because their well water is tainted with fecal matter. We should be discussing meaningful ways to address the root of the problem instead of superficial quick fixes that will do nothing to solve the underlying issue.

Rep. Gary Hebl represents the 46th Assembly District, which includes the cities of Sun Prairie and Stoughton, the village of Cottage Grove, and the townships of Cottage Grove, Dunkirk, Pleasant Springs, and Sun Prairie.

Contact Rep. Hebl with any questions or concerns you may have at (608) 266-7678 or via email at Rep.Hebl@legis.wi.gov.

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