



Media Release

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Walker administration misleads on environmental rollbacks for Foxconn

Memo confirms permit exemptions could apply to multiple businesses, or across whole state

MADISON – At the August 22nd Joint Finance Committee public hearing on the Foxconn special session bill, members of Governor Walker’s administration made multiple misleading statements to the committee to downplay the extent of the environmental permitting exemptions contained in the bill.

In one exchange, Rep. Katrina Shankland (D-Stevens Point) asked the administration if, “...the lack of permitting requirements for dredging, filling, connecting waterways – none of that applies in an EITM zone outside of Foxconn?” DOA Secretary Scott Neitzel responded, “Correct.”

In fact, Secretary Neitzel’s statement was not accurate. The non-partisan Legislative Fiscal Bureau (LFB) confirmed this week that the Foxconn bill includes no geographic restrictions on the creation of the EITM zone and that any new manufacturing facility within the EITM zone – not just Foxconn – would qualify for the same environmental permitting exemptions.

In response, Rep. Shankland released the following statement:

“Perhaps in an attempt to downplay the significance of the environmental rollbacks in the Foxconn bill, the Walker administration has publicly claimed that the exemptions only apply to Foxconn. This is misleading at best, and dishonest at worst. The truth is that the bill contains absolutely no limits on how many new businesses in the EITM zone could bypass DNR permitting, nor does it limit how large the EITM zone could be. The zone could be in multiple, separate areas of the state, potentially affecting wetlands across Wisconsin.

“The Walker administration is asking taxpayers to trust them – that they only ‘intend’ for Foxconn to be allowed to dredge and fill wetlands without a permit. Just like the administration is asking the public to trust that they will enforce clawbacks if Foxconn does not keep its job promises. With \$3 billion at stake, Wisconsin taxpayers deserve more than reliance on blind trust – they deserve ironclad protections in the bill.

“Given Governor Walker's confidence in this project, the administration should welcome the opportunity to match the language of the bill to their stated intent. I hope they will review the Legislative Fiscal Bureau memo and correct this glaring issue as soon as possible.”

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A copy of the Legislative Fiscal Bureau memo is attached.