Hansen Releases Details of Proposed Mining Legislation

90% of Wisconsin adults in favor of ending special treatment for mines

(Madison)—Senator Dave Hansen (D-Green Bay) released additional details today on legislation drafted that would end separate environmental regulations for mines in Wisconsin. The bill would make changes in three areas of mining regulation, solid waste, hazardous waste, and general environmental standards.

According to Hansen, mines are treated separate from other businesses in Wisconsin. “Currently, mines are not held to the same standards as any other business. They get special treatment, and that just doesn’t make sense. This bill would require mines to meet the same general state and federal environmental standards as any other business. It’s only fair. And in that respect, it’s pretty common-sense legislation that I believe will enjoy bi-partisan support.”

The proposed legislation would make mining waste facilities subject to the same standards as solid waste facilities. Currently, landfills must generally meet groundwater standards 300 feet from landfill sites, whereas mines do not have to meet groundwater standards until 1,200 feet out. “Right now, mines are allowed to pollute 1,200 feet in diameter from their waste facilities. That’s a very large area, especially when you consider that potential mining sites in Wisconsin are in some of the most environmentally sensitive areas of our state. The proposed Crandon mine, for example, is near the headwaters of the Wolf River, and sits nearby wetlands, streams, lakes, and groundwater that all flow into the Wolf.”

The bill would also require that if mining waste has the characteristics of hazardous waste, then it would be treated as hazardous waste. “Why treat some hazardous waste one way, and other hazardous waste another way?”

Senator Hansen announced his plan to introduce a mining regulation bill at a press conference with leaders from the Potawatomi Nation and other legislators from Northeast Wisconsin. The press conference was held to announce recent poll results that show 90% of Wisconsin adults oppose special treatment for mining. The poll, conducted by Chamberlain Research Consultants of Madison, has a margin of error of between 4% and 5%.

“It’s as clear as the water in the Wolf River that the people of this state have serious concerns about the proposed Crandon Mine and their desire to make certain that, if opened, the mine will be subject to the same tough environmental standards as any other business,” said Hansen.

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