

State Assembly Keeps Government Authority of DNR Secretary Appointment

By Dick Ellis

The State Assembly this week failed to override Governor James Doyle's veto of AB 138, the bill that would have restored the appointment authority of the DNR Secretary to the Natural Resources Board. A two-thirds majority was required to restore appointment responsibility to the NRB and away from the governor. The vote was 58 to 38 in favor of override, eight votes short of the required majority.

George Meyer, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, which led the effort promoting override of Doyle's veto, issued remarks on the vote soon after the session concluded. This space also solicited remarks from Representative Jim Ott, 23rd Assembly District Republican, who voted to uphold the veto.

"Many members of the State Assembly faced their most difficult decision of

the session on February 23rd when voting on the override of Governor Doyle's veto of AB 138," Ott wrote. "The bill would have transferred the authority for appointing the DNR Secretary from the Governor back to the Natural Resources Board (NRB) and the State Senate. AB 138 was originally passed by the Legislature last fall and then vetoed by Governor Doyle in November. As an avid fisherman who is greatly concerned about protecting Wisconsin's natural resources I appreciate the many contacts I received from sportsmen's groups and individuals regarding AB 138. My vote to sustain the veto was not taken lightly."

"My original support for transferring appointing authority back to the NRB was contingent on a companion bill, AB 84, that would have required at least three members of the NRB have a hunting,

trapping or fishing background, as determined by license purchases in seven of the previous ten years prior to appointment. AB 84 finally made it to the Assembly floor on the same day as the override vote, but by that time there was no guarantee the bill would have received a vote in the Senate before the end of the session."

"An additional critical factor in my decision was an amendment added to AB 138 last fall that would have given confirmation authority of the NRB's choice to the State Senate. For those who favored transferring appointment authority back to the Governor to take "politics" out of selection process, this amendment completely defeated the purpose."

"In the end my decision came down to accountability. As a legislator I know who the Governor is and what he stands for - so do the voters. It is in any

Governor's interest to make a wise selection as he will be held accountable for that choice. Most sportsmen do not even know who is on the unelected NRB (appointed by the Governor) and if the NRB makes a selection we did not agree with, they are answerable to no one."

Many conservation group leaders endorsing the override, including Meyer, have been quoted specific to this issue on numerous occasions for this column. Below are unedited quotes taken from a WWF media release issued on February 24th with Meyer listed as the only contact person.

"Yesterday, Governor James Doyle and thirty-eight Wisconsin state representatives rejected the request of 270 hunting, fishing, trapping, forestry and other conservation and environmental groups to restore the appointment authority of the DNR Secretary back to the

Natural Resources Board.”

“In the last week before the vote, big business interests, such as the Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce, the Wisconsin Builders Association, the Wisconsin Realtors and the Wisconsin Farm Bureau lobbied state representatives heavily and the two-thirds majority to override the veto was lost. These groups and others opposed to the override contribute heavily to Doyle and the thirty-eight representatives that voted against Wisconsin sportsmen and women. As an example, it has been reported that these interests contributed \$4.14 million to Doyle since 2003. Doyle’s aides including a DNR employee were actively lobbying against the override in the State Capitol yesterday.”

“Approximately two hundred blaze orange clad hunters, anglers trappers and other conservationists were at the Capitol to show their strong support for the veto override.

The following thirty-eight state representatives actually looked those sportsmen and women in the eye and voted no on the veto override.:

Republicans Voting Against the Override:

Ballweg,
Brooks
Davis
Fitzgerald
Friske
Gottlieb

Gunderson
Gundrum
Honadel
Huebsch
Kerkman
Kestell
Kleefisch
Knodl
Kramer
LeMahieu
Lothian
Montgomery
Murtha
Nass
Newcomer
Nygren
Al Ott
Jim Ott
Petersen
Petrowski
Pridemore
Rhoades
Stone
Strachota
Townsend
Vos
Vukmir
Zipperer

Democrats Voting Against the Override:

Steinbrink
Young
Zepnick

Independent Voting Against the Override:

Wood

Democrat Paired Against the Override:

Kessler

A special thank you to the following 58 representatives who resisted the heavy lobbying by the business interests and the Governor and voted to support Wisconsin sportsmen and women:

Republicans Voting for the Override:

Bies
Kaufert
Meyer
Mursau
Nerison
Ripp
Roth
Spanbauer
Tauchen
Van Roy
Mary Williams

Democrats Voting for the Override:

Barca
Benedict
Berceau
Bernard Schaber
Black
Clark
Colon
Cullen
Danou
Dexter
Fields
Garthwaite
Grigsby
Hebl
Hilgenberg
Hintz
Hixson
Hraychuck
Hubler
Jorgensen
Krusick
Mason
Milroy
Molepske
Nelson
Parisi
Pasch
Pocan
Pope-Roberts
Radcliffe
Richards
Roys
Schneider
Seidel
Sheridan

Sherman
Shilling
Sinicki
Smith
Soletski
Staskunas
Toles
Turner
Van Akkeren
Vruwink
Ziegelbauer
Zigmunt.

Democrats Paired for the Override:

Annette Williams

Republican Scott Sudera co-sponsor and a strong supporter of the bill did not vote due to his active duty deployment in Afghanistan. We greatly appreciate his service and support.

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