

## PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:  
Wednesday, March 30, 2005

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### **From Policy to Process, 'Dirty Air Bill' Bad News for Wisconsin**

Madison- Today, conservation and democracy organizations gathered at the Capitol to denounce the second version of the worst conservation bill in Wisconsin's history. Together, the organizations condemned the content of the bill and the undemocratic process by which it is being introduced.

"When you give the public less than 24 hours to analyze and comment on a bill that could have serious effects on their health and the health of their children, you clearly are hoping to sneak something by them. If this is good for Wisconsinites, why are Legislators trying to keep the public out of the process?" said Kerry Schumann, Executive Director of Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters.

"Perhaps they are sneaking this through because it will allow more pollutants into our air. These increased toxic air emissions can lead to cancer, birth defects, neurological damage, impaired fetal brain development, respiratory problems, reproductive problems, suppressed immune systems and developmental delays. We can only assume that this bill was drafted behind closed doors by the polluting industries that stand to benefit from putting more toxic emissions into our air," said Schumann.

The Dirty Air Bill, if passed, would lead to more emissions of health-harming air pollution. The proposed bill would:

- Exempt the largest sources of air pollution from obtaining construction permits, a key permit designed to control pollution;
- Stop limits on air pollution pending a legal challenge to an operation permit by the permit holder;
- Keep neighbors from commenting on new air pollution sources in their neighborhoods;
- Allow construction to begin by simply notifying state government of a project and prohibiting neighbors from taking legal action to stop it; and
- Eliminate periodic review of pollution levels and impacts on neighbors by allowing permits to never expire.

"The proposal goes further than Act 118 by allowing utilities, paper mills, and other large sources of air pollution to avoid construction permit requirements," according to Melissa K. Scanlan, Executive Director of Midwest Environmental Advocates, a non-profit environmental law center. "This will violate the federal Clean Air Act and means that the air we breathe will get dirtier."

The first mention of the so-called ‘Jobs Creation Act II’ by Assembly Majority Leader John Gard was on Monday evening through an internal memo at the Capitol. The Assembly leadership allowed other Legislators just 23 hours to sign-on as co-sponsors and scheduled a public hearing for today at 10:00am.

“I don’t know how citizens could have found out about the bill, especially since as of 4:00 last night it wasn’t listed on the Legislature’s website. Even if someone did manage to stumble on information about the bill, the timeline imposed by the Assembly gave Wisconsin citizens only a few hours to review the bill, prepare their thoughts, do what is needed to get to Madison – such as take a day off of work and/or find child care – and then come and testify. It’s an appalling attack on democracy,” said Andrea Kaminski of the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin.

“This bill is a perfect example of how this has become a lobbyists’ Legislature. This bill doesn’t even have an assigned number. The Assembly leaders know that it’s not ready for introduction, yet it’s already up for a public hearing,” said Mike McCabe, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign.

The groups called on the Assembly Natural Resources Committee to oppose the bill.

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*For more information on the process behind Act 118, the first version of this bill, refer to the Wisconsin Conservation Briefing Book 2005-2006 or visit, [http://www.conservationvoters.org/brbk05/brbk\\_democ.shtml](http://www.conservationvoters.org/brbk05/brbk_democ.shtml).*