



JIM DOYLE
GOVERNOR
STATE OF WISCONSIN

February 4, 2004

TO THE HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE SENATE:

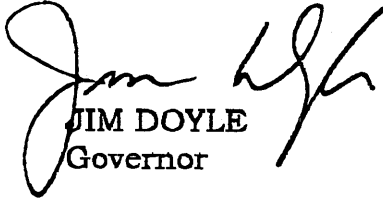
I am vetoing Senate Bill 252 in its entirety. The bill subjects proposed land acquisition, property development, and grants to local units of government and nonprofit organizations under the Warren Knowles-Gaylord Nelson Stewardship 2000 Program to passive review by the Joint Committee on Finance if the transaction's cost exceeds \$250,000. This proposal is similar to a previous passive review process for Stewardship transactions that I vetoed in the 2003-05 state budget bill.

After decades of bipartisan support for land conservation that began with Governors Gaylord Nelson and Warren Knowles, the Joint Committee on Finance, in recent years, used their passive review process to politicize Stewardship transactions. Projects were needlessly delayed, sometimes for nearly a year, before the committee would schedule a review. These delays jeopardized many transactions, increased land transaction costs, threatened matching funds raised by private citizens, conservation organizations and local and federal governments, and finally resulted in high quality projects being rejected by partisan votes. Stewardship land conservation is critical to protecting Wisconsin's quality of life and our vital tourist industry.

I support public input and thorough review of proposed land acquisitions and other activities under the Stewardship 2000 Program. Under current law, the seven member, citizen Natural Resources Board provides policy review and opportunities for public comment on Stewardship 2000 Program activity. State conservation areas are created after public input and open hearings and a public vote by the Natural Resources Board. Individual land purchases over \$150,000 are reviewed and voted upon by the Natural Resources Board in open meetings. This appropriate review process takes the politics out of land conservation and lets the citizen Natural Resources Board make these decisions based upon the merits of the transaction, not partisan politics. I object to the unnecessary duplication of review included in SB 252 and the reinsertion of politics into land conservation.

Lastly, the bill will lead to negative impacts on time sensitive land conservation projects and will jeopardize critical matching funds provided by private conservation organizations, local governments, and the federal government.

Respectfully submitted,



JIM DOYLE
Governor