



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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Republicans Introduce the 2025 Wisconsin Energy Reform Act Largest Energy Reform in Decades Protects Ratepayers, Creates Competition

Madison...Legislative Republicans introduced sweeping energy reform legislation known as the 2025 “Wisconsin Energy Reform Act”, or WERA, after announcing last week that a less competitive piece of legislation known as ROFR, would die in the Assembly Energy and Utilities Committee and not be brought to the Assembly floor for a vote.

The lead author of the bill, Rep. Jerry O’Connor (R- Fond du Lac) says the intent of the legislation is to secure a more competitive landscape for energy companies and ratepayers in Wisconsin. WERA will include bidding controls for interstate and intrastate electrical transmission lines that will significantly increase the accountability of developers and owners of these large transmission lines to the citizens.

“This is the most comprehensive energy reform package brought forward in Wisconsin in decades,” said Rep. O’Connor. “By instituting actual competitive bidding standards, we are poised to be a national leader in utility transmission practices.”

It’s important to note that current law in Wisconsin doesn’t require competitive bidding for utility construction and current practices regulated by the Federal Electricity Regulatory Commission (FERC) do not require projects to be awarded to the lowest bidder. FERC also has sole jurisdiction over the rate of return that operators of high-capacity transmission lines are allowed to earn.

“For anyone to somehow believe that our current process for siting transmission lines is competitive or free market is just wrong,” said representative Rob Brooks (R-Saukville). “Wisconsin can show the rest of the nation how we can inject competitive bidding into the construction process for transmission lines and hopefully lower cost for consumers.”

WERA also addresses farmland preservation by taking a sustainable, landowner-centered, and business-friendly approach to wind and solar siting. Modeled after the PACE program, an initiative created by former Democrat Governor Jim Doyle, WERA will require that for each acre of high-productivity farmland that is used for renewable energy projects, multiple acres of farmland will

be protected for future agricultural use. The chair of the Assembly Agriculture Committee, Rep. Travis Tranel (R- Cuba City), spearheaded this major effort.

“I worked hard to strike the right balance to protect prime farmland for generations of farmers to come, while still recognizing the need to protect private property owners and the reality that energy generation in Wisconsin will likely always include renewable sources,” said Tranel.

To add to a low-carbon energy strategy, nuclear energy reforms are also included in WERA by incentivizing utilities to develop nuclear energy in Wisconsin.

A long-time supporter of nuclear energy generation, Energy and Utilities chairman, Rep. David Steffen (R-Howard), touted this as a major win for Wisconsin ratepayers.

“This has the potential to attract billions of dollars in investments to Wisconsin,” said Steffen. “By prioritizing low-carbon-emitting nuclear energy as a strategy in energy generation, we will help position Wisconsin to meet the increased electricity demands of today and lay the groundwork Wisconsin needs to be able to attract large electricity technology companies looking to locate their operations in Wisconsin,” said Steffen.

The bill will be heard in the Energy and Utilities Committee in the coming days.

Speaker Robin Vos says he hopes to be able to bring this to the Assembly floor in April.

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