

Wisconsin Utility Association Issue Digest, 2015-16

May 14, 2015 Edition

Following are bills and issues on which WUA is engaged or is monitoring during the 2015-16 Legislative Session. Bills include active links to the Legislature's homepage. Latest actions are in italics.

SUPPORT

[AB 122 \(Czaja/Petrowski\)](#) – This bill exempts utilities' vehicles from seasonal weight limits on Class B highways to enable them to restore utility service. AB 122 passed the Assembly Transportation Committee on April 8th, as amended by [AA 1](#), 15-0, and passed the Assembly, as amended, on a voice vote on April 14, 2015. AA1 extends the exemption to contractors of utilities. AB 122 was concurred-in by the Senate on a voice vote on April 21st and *awaits the Governor's signature*. WUA [supported](#) this bill and its companion, SB 80.

[Appointment of Michael Huebsch to the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin](#) – **WUA supported** the appointment and confirmation of Michael Huebsch to the PSCW. The appointment was referred to the [Committee on Workforce Development, Public Works, and Military Affairs](#) but was withdrawn and re-referred to the [committee on Natural Resources and Energy](#) pursuant to Senate Rule [46\(2\)\(c\)](#). A public hearing was held on April 7th and he was confirmed by the Senate on April 21, 2015 on a [28-5](#) vote.

[SB 135 / AB 198 \(Petrowski/Spiros\)](#) - This bill would prohibit the use of a cellphone or other wireless telephone while driving in a construction zone or utility work zone when workers are present. It includes fines ranging from \$20 to \$100; clarifies that: 1) a handheld cellphone may be used in a construction zone to report an emergency; and 2) a driver may use a voice-operated or hands-free device to operate a handheld cellphone. WUA [supports](#) this bill which had a public hearing April 30th. WUA testified in favor before the Senate Transportation Committee where SB 135 *currently resides*. AB 198 had a public hearing on May 12 before the Assembly Transportation Committee. WUA also testified in favor of the Assembly version of the bill at the hearing. *No action has been taken on these bills since their hearings.*

MONITOR

[AB 66 \(Shankland, Miller\)](#) – This bill, among other things, creates the Wisconsin Renewable Energy Development Authority (WREDA) and authorizes WREDA to implement programs for developing renewable resources, reducing energy consumption, and improving energy efficiency. It was introduced February 27th,

2015 and was referred to the Assembly Committee on State Affairs and Govt. Operations where it now resides. WUA has not publicly taken [a position](#) on this bill and *no action has been taken since the last report.*

BUDGET ITEMS - AB 21/SB 21

CUB Funding – On April 15, the Joint Finance Committee approved motion #[29](#) (12-4, party-line), authored by Co-chairs Sen. Darling and Rep. Nygren to:

- Reduce the PSCW intervener compensation rate to 50% from 100%;
- Eliminate the \$300K annual grant to CUB; and
- Reduce the amount that PSCW can disburse in intervener compensation by \$671,300 annually.

WUA did not take a position on this motion.

Focus on Energy – A motion was drafted by Rep. Knodl to, among other things, allow retail utility customers to opt out of funding the PSCW Focus on Energy Program. WUA opposed this motion which has not yet been brought to the Joint Finance Committee for action. However, the author may bring it up during the budget process.

PSCW Positions – WUA has lobbied Joint Finance Committee members and DOA to: *“request that the current level of positions at PSCW subject to the Shared Agency Services Pilot Program be maintained, either through the enactment of AB21/SB21 which transfers 6 positions from DOA Office of Energy to PSCW, placing them above the 150 employee threshold for the program; **or through the exemption authority granted to the DOA Secretary through the ERRATA.**”*

Meter Retention Rules – CR 13-033, which are PSCW’s meter retention rules, are before the Assembly Energy & Utilities Committee, which must act by May 15 to either accept the rule or request changes. WUA engaged in PSCW rulemaking and submitted extensive comments. The rule PSCW submitted to Legislature included several re-numbering errors and some wording concerns regarding duplication and retention of meters & documents. *After consultation with WUA, the agency has agreed to address these issues through drafting instructions to the LRB and a memo of agency intent. The legislative standing committees have declined to exercise jurisdiction over the rules, which ends May 15.*