

ROBERT L. COWLES

**Wisconsin State Senator
2nd Senate District**

Testimony on 2019 Senate Bill 297

Senator Robert Cowles

Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy – September 3, 2019

Thank you, committee members, for allowing me to testify on 2019 Senate Bill 297. This bill requires that bug spray is sold on certain state properties when offices or concession stands are open and staffed.

The problem of Lyme disease is growing and shows no signs of slowing. Lyme disease is a bacterial disease transmitted to humans by an infected tick commonly known as the black-legged tick or deer tick. Lyme disease is manageable if caught early, but if left untreated, the infection may spread and produce symptoms that include, but aren't limited to, severe headaches and neck stiffness, pain and swelling in large joints, fatigue, cognitive decline, shooting pains, and heart palpitations.

Lyme disease is the most commonly reported vector-borne illness, which are diseases contracted by humans from animals and usually through a bite, in the United States with an estimated 30,000 Americans diagnosed each year. According to the federal Centers for Disease Control (CDC), in 2014, nearly 96% of the 25,359 Lyme disease cases are reported from only 14 states in the Northeast and Northern Midwest with 2,975 of these cases (11.7%) reported from Wisconsin. Lyme disease is the highest reported tick-borne disease in Wisconsin, with a total of 38,394 cases reported between 1990 and 2015. In 2017, Wisconsin is the 4th-worst state in the nation for incidence of Lyme disease, and rates are only increasing. Lyme disease is most common in the Northern and Western regions of the state, but is contracted in all regions of the state.



While about a dozen other states have taken actions to address the disease in recent sessions, Wisconsin has fallen behind as rates of Lyme disease has doubled in the last decade and experts at the CDC believe the number of cases may be as much as 10 times higher than what is reported through surveillance. This bill is one of five in a series of small, yet important steps to improve our approach and foster continuing discussions to combat Lyme disease in Wisconsin.

Senate Bill 297 requires the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in certain state parks and forests with an active staffing presence to sell bug spray when their park or forest office or other location in the park or forest is open and staffed. As an alternative under this bill, the DNR could create an agreement with a Friends group who has an active presence in parks such as operating a concession stand to sell bug spray when the stand is open and staffed. Currently, only a handful of State Parks sell items, meaning bug spray is not readily available to visitors. This idea has been recommended by the Department of Health Services' Environmental Public Health Tracking Program.

Bug spray doesn't just help with mosquitos, but DEET can repel ticks as well. After raising the awareness on how to prevent tick bites, we need to raise the availability of bug spray by selling it in State Park System offices and concession stands to serve the visitors of our Parks System and lower the number of tick bites on state properties and in general throughout Wisconsin.



Jeff Mursau

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 36TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy
SB 297- Sale of Insect Repellant in State Parks and Forests
September 3, 2019

Chairman Cowles and Committee Members -

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 297, which requires that insect repellant be available for purchase in state parks and state forests.

Specifically, the bill requires the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to ensure that insect repellant is available for purchase in every state park and forest. The bug spray can be sold at the park office or by working with a friends group that operates a concession stand in the park or forest to sell it when the stand is open and staffed.

According to the DNR, nearly 18 million people visited our state parks in 2018. The heaviest traffic is when ticks are most active, from May through September. I think we've all been outside when mosquitos are biting and we've forgotten our bug spray and some nice person offers to share their own. This same repellant is also effective in protecting a person from getting a tick. Having repellant available in our parks and forests is a small service we can provide that can enhance a visitor's enjoyment. And according to the fiscal estimate, it may be possible to absorb all or some of the cost through the new camping reservation system or through sales revenues.

As you heard in related testimony, in 2018 Wisconsin had over 3,100 estimated cases of Lyme Disease. The average number of cases has more than doubled over the past 10 years. According to the CDC, Wisconsin is one of the states reporting the highest number of cases and in all reality the actual number of cases is probably a lot higher than what is reported. Taking preventative measures, like using insect repellant, is one way to reduce the number of tick bites in Wisconsin.

Once again, thank you for holding a hearing on SB 297 today. I'm happy to answer any questions.

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Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy

2019 Senate Bill 297

Selling Insect Repellant in State Parks and Forests *September 3, 2019*

Good afternoon Chairman Cowles and members of the Committee. My name is Missy VanLanduyt, and I am the Section Chief for Recreation Partnerships in the Bureau of Parks and Recreations Management with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Thank you for the opportunity to testify for informational purposes on Senate Bill 297 (SB 297), which requires the Department to ensure that insect repellent is available for sale at every state park and state forest. We also want to acknowledge and thank the bill authors for reaching out to us and working with the DNR prior to this bill being introduced.

SB 297 requires that insect repellent is available for sale at every state park and state forest office, or other logical location on the property. It does not require that repellent be sold at properties where there is no state park or forest office or other logical location where the product can be sold. It also allows the Department to sell the repellent directly, or to work with a local friends group to sell the product.

Currently, five out of our potential 64 properties sell goods to visitors. We do believe that we would be able to implement this program, and after absorbing initial start-up costs we would be able to cover the ongoing costs of the program with the sales proceeds.

On behalf of the Wisconsin State Park System and the DNR, thank you for your time today. I would be happy to answer any questions you have.

Testimony of behalf of The Friends of Wisconsin State Parks (FWSP) Supportive of Senate Bills 296, 297, 298, 300

FSWP supports passage of the above senate bills. There are aprox 70 Friends Groups that have donated millions of dollars and thousands of hours of volunteer labor to state lands properties. Many of these properties are in the heart of tick country.

Tick and tick spread diseases are the scourge of outdoor living. You don't have to wander off the beaten path to find them or for ticks to find you! Ticks are now present in every Midwest State and all counties in WI. Ten to fifteen years ago, ticks were rare in the southern WI but that's all changed. Ticks are on the move which is causing an increasingly severe public health threat. Many people are actively outdoors deal with this menace on a regular basis. It's gotten to the point where almost everyone knows someone who has Lyme disease.

Preventing Lyme Disease is not about keeping people from visiting Wisconsin's great outdoors, but instead it's about educating people on how to prevent tick bites, how to search the body for ticks and raising the awareness of the warning signs of Lyme Disease to catch the disease early

The proposed legislation will help Wisconsin deal with this huge health care issue. While over a dozen other states have taken action to combat the Lyme Disease, Wisconsin has fallen behind in addressing the issue, and while we cannot prevent every case, we have a vital need to address Lyme Disease to help the people of our state.

The most dangerous tick species is the female deer or black-legged tick which unfortunately is very common in Wisconsin. Deer ticks represent the gravest threat to humans and companion animals due to their propensity to carry and spread a variety of diseases. They can carry Lyme disease, anaplasmosis, tick-borne relapsing fever, babesiosis, ehrlichiosis and Powassan illness. If caught early most cases are treated successfully with antibiotics. That's why this legislation is so important. Each year, approximately 30,000 cases are reported, according to the (CDC). Recent estimates suggest that approximately 300,000 people get Lyme Disease, only 1/10 cases are reported and many of these evolve into an extensive disease process which can be devastating . That's another reason why this legislation should be passed. Wisconsin is now ranked 4th worst in the country in the prevalence of Lyme Disease.

Ticks are tough animals to deal with. They can spend months off their hosts, without feeding due to their low resting metabolic rates. Then rise from near dead to latch on to a host. Recent evidence indicates that the aggressive Lone Star tick is moving through Illinois and into southern Wisconsin. This is another dangerous tick species that carries a variety of diseases.

The four bills on the agenda Tuesday are part of a larger 5 bill package which are all sorely needed.

By emphasizing awareness, prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of Lyme Disease through these bills, the Legislature has made a bold first step to fight Lyme Disease and other vector-borne illnesses in our state.

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Friends of Wisconsin State Parks Policy Chairperson