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House of Representatives
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Harrisburg

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INTEROFFICE MEMO

DATE: SEPTEMBER 15, 2011
TO: ALL HOUSE MEMBERS
FROM: REPRESENTATIVE RON MILLER *REM*
RE: PROPOSED LEGISLATION - ESTABLISH STATEWIDE PRIVATE WATER WELL CONSTRUCTION STANDARDS

I will be introducing new legislation that provides the statutory authority authorizing the Environmental quality Board to establish water well construction standards through the adoption of rules and regulations of the DEP that are generally consistent with the National Groundwater Association construction standards.

Some 20,000 new water wells are drilled each year in Pennsylvania, but the Commonwealth is one of the few states without private well regulations. More than 3 million Pennsylvanians rely on about 1 million private wells for drinking water. Improperly constructed water wells can lead to poor water quality by providing pathways for bacteria and contaminants such as naturally occurring shallow methane gas to migrate into water supplies. Ensuring that the well is constructed properly from the start will help to prevent water quality problems in the future.

To avoid any confusion upfront; the proposed legislation would merely establish construction standards, including the decommissioning of abandoned wells, to be followed by water well drillers and owners. Nothing in this legislation requires the metering of homeowner wells. In fact, Section 3118 (b)(f) of Act 220 or 2002, known as the Water Resource Planning Act, specifically prohibits DEP or EQB from requiring the metering of homeowner wells.

Establishing water well construction standards is an important component of the Commonwealth's water resource protection program. Specifically, two independent statewide advisory committees have made strong recommendations to do so. On December 18, 2008, the Statewide Water Resources Committee reported its top legislative recommendation was to "...establish statewide private water well construction standards." On July 22, 2011, the Marcellus Shale Commission issued its recommendations which are included on page 108; "The Commonwealth should enact legislation establishing construction standards for new private water wells to ensure the delivery of safe drinking water to its residents."

If you wish to cosponsor this legislation, please contact Dawn Wolfe at 783-8389 or email dwolfe@pahousegop.com. Thank you.