

# Feingold promotes water industry

Senator says measure  
would fund business

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In announcing new economic legislation, U.S. Sen. Russ Feingold on Tuesday became the latest public official to throw his weight behind the emerging water-technology industry of southeastern Wisconsin.

"Milwaukee can be the Silicon Valley, or the hub, of water technology," Feingold said in an appearance at Procorp Enterprises LLC, a fast-growing metro company in the Milwaukee County Research Park. Procorp describes itself as an innovator of low-cost water treatment technologies.

Feingold said his initiative would prioritize federal funding for research-intensive water start-ups as well as small businesses in the energy, transportation and domestic security sectors.

The senator said he's excited by the growth prospects of the water-engineering companies in metro Milwaukee, which regional civic leaders began to promote during the past year. He cited technology funding for water innovation as the "pre-eminent example" of what his legislation is meant to accomplish.

"There is no agency that specifically addresses our business of water," said Procorp President Franz Hoffmann.

The proposed legislation centers on two existing programs meant to promote small-business innovation and commercialization.

The Small Business Innovation Research, which requires federal agencies with research-and-development budgets of more than \$100 million to allocate 2.5% of those expenditures to small business, would increase that share of grants to 10% over a four-year period.

The second program — the Small Business Technology Transfer — stipulates that agencies spend 0.3% of its grants on small business, which Feingold would extend to 1%.

Neither program prioritizes small business sectors such as water or energy, Feingold emphasized.

If Feingold's legislation becomes law, it would apply to as many as 11 federal agencies ranging from the U.S. departments of agriculture, commerce and defense to the Environmental Protection Agency, a Feingold aide said.

Procorp develops reactors that clean water and simultaneously remove minerals in a process that avoids byproducts such as sludge, which is costly to haul and dispose of. Its reactors produce crystalized pellets of limestone, magnesium and phosphate, which can be resold as commodities.

Procorp this year applied for a \$850,000 Small Business Technology Transfer grant for a pilot project to strip radium from the water in the City of Waukesha, where decades of water demand have drawn down underground reservoirs by hundreds of feet and left deep aquifers with concentrations of radium that exceed federal limits.

Because radium belongs in a similar chemical family as calcium, Procorp's pilot reactor produces limestone pellets with trace amounts of radium.

Procorp began the pilot project this summer and argues that it successfully found a way to lower radium below federal limits. If it wins the federal grant, it will build a full-scale water reactor with a capacity in excess of 1 million gallons a day.

It's working with the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Engineering School, which is exploring whether the pellets can be recycled into road-building and concrete construction in environmental and economic ways.

Privately held Procorp, which has a staff of 20, is aiming for 2008 sales of \$15 million to \$20 million and expects 200% annual growth in coming years, said Chief Operating Officer Eric Fessler.