

OFFICE OF THE DRAIN COMMISSIONER
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Drain Commissioner Will Not Seek Re-Election
Bill Byl to Retire after 30 Years of Political Service

GRAND RAPIDS – On Monday, Bill Byl announced that he will not seek a fourth term as Kent County Drain Commissioner, bringing his 30-year political career to an end in December 2016. He served eight years on the Kent County Board of Commissioners (1987-1994), six years representing the 75th District in the Michigan House of Representatives (1995-2000) and the past ten years as Drain Commissioner. He also directed the GVSU Public Policy Institute for six years.

“Next November will be the 50th anniversary of my first job in construction, the 30th anniversary of my first election to the County Board, my 10th anniversary as Drain Commissioner, and my 70th birthday, all within a few week’s span. It seems to be the right time to move on,” Byl said.

Byl specialized in environmental and infrastructure areas. During 18 years at the County, he served on the Board of Public Works, including four years as chairman. In his tenure, Kent County initiated County-wide recycling, building the first Recycling Center on Market Street and the current one on Wealthy Street. Additionally, the Waste-to-Energy plant was built in 1988-1990. It began operations in 1990 and continues to this day.

During his terms in Lansing, Byl served on the Transportation Committee and chaired the Appropriations sub-committee on Natural Resources and Environmental Quality. He advocated for and helped accomplish passage of the 1997 increase in transportation taxes. Byl sponsored and helped pass the statute that required primary enforcement of Michigan seat belt laws. He also helped found and co-chair the Bi-partisan Urban Caucus, a legislative policy group that promoted improving land use and urban revitalization measures.

“It has been a wonderful privilege to serve the citizens of West Michigan over this time, and serving as Drain Commissioner has been the ‘icing on the cake’,” Bill said. “It has been both challenging and rewarding; every day of the last ten years I have looked forward to coming in to work. I have had an opportunity to work in partnership with hundreds of dedicated public servants and I am grateful to the voters of Kent County for electing me and supporting me over the last 30 years.”

Byl and his wife Annette live in Grand Rapids and have four grown children and five grandchildren. “They are scattered over the continent, and we hope to be able to see a lot more of them in the coming years,” Byl added.

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