

# Assembly battles over Medicaid expansion during opioid debate

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Assembly Republicans are turning back an effort from Dems to accept the Medicaid expansion during today's debate on several special session bills on opioid abuse.

Republicans also charged Dems with fundraising off the debate, with Assembly Speaker Robin Vos saying it's "disgusting" that Dems are "using this as a political issue to raise money." They gave reporters an email from the ADCC sent this afternoon telling supporters that Republicans are refusing to "bring Wisconsin tax dollars back to our state to fund healthcare."

But Rep. Chris Taylor, D-Madison, said she thinks it's "disgusting" that Republicans have refused to cover additional people under Medicaid and take the expanded federal dollars for the program.

Dems are trying to add amendments to some of the opioid bills aiming to get Wisconsin to accept the Medicaid expansion, saying the amendments would ensure the proposals are funded adequately.

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Assembly Minority Leader Peter Barca, D-Kenosha, applauded the bills and the work from Rep. John Nygren, R-Marinette, on the issue. But he said the state "can have a much greater impact" by accepting the Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act and giving people better access to alcohol and drug treatment.

Rep. Lisa Subeck, D-Madison, said lawmakers are missing "the most critical part to the solution."

Assembly Republicans have declined to accept the Medicaid expansion amendments so far.

At the start of the debate, Nygren pushed back against the effort, suggesting Dems weren't "really serious" about it because they didn't let Republicans know about the amendments until a bit before the session started.

He later said he was "appalled on behalf of" families affected by the opioid addiction that Dems were looking to raise money off today's debate.

"Using this discussion as an opportunity to raise funds sinks to a new level," he said.

Rep. Gary Hebl, D-Sun Prairie, said that argument is "absurd" and said Republicans have "made a debacle" of campaign finance laws in this state so they could raise more money.