Cowles joins Dems in voting against GOP amendment to Foxconn bill

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The Senate is now debating the overall Foxconn incentive package after rejecting a series of Dem amendments and approving two authored by Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald, R-Juneau.

One, which passed earlier today, would state WEDC "shall establish job creation thresholds" while tying capital expenditure tax benefits to those benchmarks.

The second passed 19-14, with Sen. Robert Cowles, R-Green Bay, joining Democrats in voting against it.

The amendment would maintain the appeals court's role in any lawsuits filed over decisions related to the economic development zone where the project is located. But the amendment would still speed up the process compared to typical appeals.

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The Joint Finance Committee added an amendment to the bill that directed the state Supreme Court to directly hear appeals of circuit court rulings related to any decision made by a state or local official, board, commission or other authority.

Under Fitzgerald's amendment, the appeals court would collect filings in the case. It would then send the appeal directly to the state Supreme Court without first issuing a decision. If the Supreme Court refused to take jurisdiction, the case would be sent back to the appeals court for a ruling.

Fitzgerald's office said the expedited appeals process would apply to any decision made by state and local officials related to a company in the electronics and information technology manufacturing zone, not just Foxconn.

The amendment also includes a provision that any circuit court ruling would be automatically stayed once an appeal was filed. That is similar to language JFC added to the bill.