

# Senate votes to eliminate treasurer's office

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The state Senate again voted today to eliminate the office of the state treasurer, putting the constitutional amendment one step away from going to the voters for final say next spring.

Dems objected to the amendment, with Sen. Kathleen Vinehout, D-Alma, pointing to the duties that have been stripped away from the office in recent years. That includes oversight of public funding for state Supreme Court races, Wisconsin's college savings program and the unclaimed property program.

Vinehout said those backing the amendment have looked at the lack of remaining powers for the office to justify its removal.

"That is the wrong conclusion," she argued. "Instead, we should be bringing back the duties that have been transferred to the Department of Administration and make sure that when it comes to billions of dollars in state funds that there are separation of duties, that there are checks and balances, that there are more than one agency."

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State Sen. Dan Feyen, R-Fond du Lac, pointed out current Treasurer Matt Adamczyk has lobbied the Legislature to eliminate the office and argued the office's elimination is in line with his goal of returning powers to voters, shrinking government and reducing wasteful spending.

"The office no longer serves a purpose," he said.

Both houses approved the amendment last session, and it cleared the Senate today 18-15 as GOP Sens. Sheila Harsdorf, of River Falls, and Chris Kapenga, of Delafield,

joined Dems in voting no.

The Assembly is slated to take up the amendment on Thursday. If it passes both houses this week, it would go to voters in April 2018 for a referendum.

In addition to eliminating the office, the proposal would change the state constitution to replace the treasurer with the lieutenant governor on the Board of Commissioners of Public Lands.

Vinehout and Sen. Mark Miller, D-Monona, raised concerns about the second provision. Miller argued the BCPL, which oversees lands and investments with proceeds benefitting public school libraries, was designed by the framers of the Wisconsin Constitution to be independent of the gov's office. Replacing the treasurer with the lieutenant governor would chip away at that. He proposed an amendment that would have replaced the treasurer on the BCPL with the superintendent of Public Instruction, but it was shot down along party lines.

Vinehout also raised concerns the amendment was unconstitutional as written because it addresses two issues. Instead, the elimination of the office and designating the constitutional officer to fill the vacancy on the board should be split into two amendments, she argued.