

Bill including \$350 million in borrowing for a new prison clears Assembly

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The Assembly passed a bill to crack down on those who commit crimes while out on parole that includes a new amendment to add \$350 million in borrowing to pay for a new adult prison.

The bill, which also featured a provision to add assistant DA positions in more than half of the state's counties, cleared the chamber on a [59-35 vote](#), while the [substitute amendment](#) passed on a voice vote.

Rep. Adam Jarchow, R-Balsam Lake, joined all the Dems in opposing the legislation.

Dems on the floor argued there were better alternatives to reducing crime over the bill, saying the current legislation represented a costly mistake.

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Rep. Evan Goyke, D-Milwaukee, instead encouraged lawmakers to follow other states' leads and reform their criminal justice reforms, which he said has allowed states like Michigan and Texas to close prisons and save money.

"Investments in brick and mortar prisons do not and will not reduce the crime rate," Goyke said, adding money instead should be spent at the family level.

But Republicans highlighted the need to both protect the state's residents and crack down when crimes are committed.

"I often find the concern for the victim is completely lacking from some members of this body," said Rep. Jim Ott, R-Mequon, adding that he didn't see the bill as a crime

prevention one although it could send a “pretty strong message” to those who may consider breaking the law while on parole.

And Rep. Joel Kleefisch, R-Oconomowoc, said: “It’s so easy to say it’s going to cost money, it’s so easy to say everyone should have as many chances as possible ... will we spend money on prisons or will we spend money on caskets?”

Meanwhile, the DA amendment, which GOP Reps. John Nygren and Mark Born introduced yesterday, would add 53.75 full-time equivalent prosecutor positions across 40 counties and cost the state \$3.9 million annually.

Republicans also shot down a [Dem amendment](#) to add 15 additional DA positions under the bill, five of which would go to Dane County while the remaining 10 would go to Milwaukee County.

“If you’re going to add them (prosecutors) to the system, add them to the entire system,” said Goyke, who co-authored the amendment.

Speaking on the floor later in the evening about the extra DA positions within the amendment, Rep. Andre Jacque, R-DePere, noted that hiring more prosecutors would help minimize delays in the criminal justice system as he called the “refusal to address this problem” previously a “bipartisan failure.”

The Senate previously passed the original version of the bill in November, which would require the Department of Corrections to recommend revoking extended supervision, parole or probation for anyone charged with a crime while on any of the three.

The DOC previously estimated that bill — without the new sub — would cost \$57 million per year and send nearly 1,800 people more people to prison annually.

But the bill got the breaks in the Assembly when Speaker Robin Vos, concerned about costs associated with the bill, had an outside consultant review its cost estimates to ensure his members were aware of the legislation’s “real cost” before voting. The bipartisan Council of State Governments’ review showed largely similar results to DOC’s estimate.

The bill now heads back to the Senate.

See more on the DA changes:

<https://www.wispolitics.com/2018/born-nygren-propose-adding-assistant-da-positions/>