

GOP bill drops requirement guvs have to call special elections ‘as promptly as possible’

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Guvs would no longer have to call special elections “as promptly as possible” to fill legislative vacancies under a plan GOP leaders introduced Monday to undercut a Dane County judge’s order.

The bill, which would apply to the open 1st SD and 42nd AD, also would create a new requirement that would mean legislative vacancies occurring after early December of odd-numbered years would not be filled until the regular November election the following year.

Rep. Keith Ripp, R-Lodi, and Sen. Frank Lasee, R-De Pere, resigned Dec. 29 to join the Walker administration.

Senate Minority Leader Jennifer Shilling blasted Republicans, saying the effort showed they’re “desperate to maintain their grip on power.”

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“The Republican-led efforts to prevent court-ordered special elections from being held is the height of corruption and the public should not accept this abuse of power,” the La Crosse Dem said.

Gov. Scott Walker spokeswoman Amy Hasenberg said Walker backs the bill, and Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald argued it would “fix” current law to prevent disenfranchising military and overseas voters.

“If Judge (Josann) Reynolds’ ruling stands, military voters seeking to vote in those elections may be disenfranchised. Clerks would likely not have adequate time to

send out, and receive back, ballots from military and overseas voters,” Fitzgerald said in a statement.

The Assembly and Senate plan to reconvene on April 4 to take up the legislation.

The language was offered as a substitute amendment to AB 947 on absentee ballots cast by overseas and military voters. It would prohibit special elections in even-numbered years after the spring general election, which is the first Tuesday each April. It also includes doubling the window for special elections after guvs order one.

The bill was written to apply to all current legislative vacancies, “notwithstanding any other law, court order or order of the governor,” meaning it would override Reynolds’ special election order.

[See the sub.](#)

See more in Monday’s PM Update.