

Republicans tweak bill to strip Evers of power to appoint WEDC CEO, but restore it in September

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Lawmakers would still strip Gov.-elect Tony Evers of the power to appoint the head of the Wisconsin Economic Development Corp., under a revised proposal the Senate and Assembly approved Wednesday.

But that power would be restored in September in a move that appears designed to give the new gov and the GOP lawmakers a window to feel each other out on the direction of the state's job creation agency.

That revision was one of several changes Republicans made to a bill that would alter the relationship between the Legislature and the gov and attorney general ahead of Evers and fellow Dem Josh Kaul assuming those offices. It also included a host of other provisions, such as new restrictions on in-person absentee voting after a federal judge issued an order preventing the state from enforcing similar steps.

In tweaking the bill, GOP lawmakers, for example, previously planned to give themselves the authority to remove the AG from a case challenging the constitutionality of a state statute.

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The amended bill instead would give lawmakers the power to intervene in those cases. It also would give them final approval of a settlement in such a case.

The bill cleared the Senate 17-16 after GOP Sen. Rob Cowles, of Green Bay, joined Dems in opposition to the bill. The Assembly approved it 56-27.

Speaker Robin Vos, R-Rochester, accused Dems of fear-mongering and stirring

people up about the contents of the extraordinary session bills.

“You are so grossly exaggerating what is in this bill, it makes me sick,” Vos said. “Because you’re supposed to be legislators. You’re spending most of your time talking about what the executive branch needs and does.”

Rep. Chris Taylor, D-Madison, says Republicans have rigged the system when they’ve won with gerrymandering, “and you’re rigging it this morning when you lost” by seeking to limit the powers of Evers and Kaul.

She also accused Republicans of being ashamed of the legislation, noting that Vos didn’t show up to Monday’s Joint Finance Committee to defend his bills.

The WEDC proposal approved today was slightly different than the original plan.

GOP lawmakers first wanted to give the Assembly speaker and Senate majority leader a majority of the appointments on the WEDC Board, which would have the power to appoint the agency CEO.

The revised proposal would still give the speaker and Senate majority leader a majority of the appointments on the board. It would go to 18 voting members with 10 of them appointed by the speaker and Senate majority leader, six by the gov, and one each by the minority leaders.

The board would then pick the CEO.

But the board would drop to 16 members Sept. 1 as the Assembly speaker and Senate majority leader would each lose one appointment. Under the political composition of the next session, that would mean eight Dem picks and eight from the GOP.

The gov’s power to restore the agency CEO would also be restored Sept. 1.

See [Quorum Call](#) for more on the Senate and Assembly’s proceedings.