

# Senate signs off on \$100 million school safety plan

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The Senate Tuesday night signed off on its version of a plan aimed at increasing school safety on a 28-4 vote.

The proposal, [adopted as an amendment to AB 843](#), differs from the six special session bills Assembly Republicans had been considering in a public hearing earlier today. Still, it leaves in place the major points of the legislation, including the creation of an Office of School Safety and the availability of \$100 million in one-time money for school safety-related grants.

The plan received nearly unanimous support, although Dem Sens. Mark Miller, of Monona; Dave Hansen, of Green Bay; Fred Risser, of Madison; and Lena Taylor, of Milwaukee; voted against it.

Among the biggest changes in the Senate version compared to the Assembly are: the grants wouldn't be able to be used to pay armed school safety officers' salaries; the grant funding is no longer allocated on a three-year timeline; and school officials wouldn't be required to tell students of parents involved in bullying within 48 hours of the incident.

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The Senate version also strikes the mention of Special Session Assembly Bill 6, which would create an exception in student privacy laws to let law enforcement get school surveillance footage if it "serves a legitimate safety interest."

Meanwhile, Dems sought to introduce a series of changes to the plan, arguing the legislation didn't go far enough on its own to curb gun violence and protect students.

That includes a sweeping [20-page amendment](#), which included a series of Dem priorities such as implementing universal background checks and banning bump stocks, as well as expanding funding for mental health services.

Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald, R-Juneau, argued the language wasn't germane to the bill, saying it "goes way beyond what we're trying to solve this evening."

But Sen. LaTonya Johnson, D-Milwaukee, said it was "dishonest" and "disingenuous" that lawmakers are acting "like we're convening for the sake of making sure that our children are protected in schools as if that is the only place where they can receive harm."

"Until we start to address the real issue in the state, these numbers are not going to go down," she said, referencing the "mass casualties" that she said would occur in Milwaukee due to gun violence this year. "And that's unfair. It's unfair for the people who live in my district. It's unfair for the people who live here in Wisconsin who are expecting us to pass laws and legislation to govern everybody and not leave anybody out."

Senate President Roger Roth later ruled both it and a second Dem amendment were not germane. While Dems appealed both times, the motions failed.

A third Dem amendment to reinstate a 48-hour waiting period for gun purchases was also tabled. Dem gov candidate Kathleen Vinehout, D-Alma, [joined all Republicans](#) in voting to table it.

One of the more emotional moments of the debate involved Senate Minority Leader Jennifer Shilling as she referenced the 2016 suicide of former GOP Sen. Rick Gudex, who died at age 48.

"I don't know how much closer we can get to this," the La Crosse Dem said. "We lost one of our members. We lost a member to gun suicide and we can't do something about it. I'm frustrated."

The Assembly is expected to convene early Thursday morning to take up the school safety legislation, as well as a number of other bills that cleared the Senate with changes today.

See more on the Senate's Tuesday session at [Quorum Call](#)