

# Evers' plan for new ADAs shifts more to Milwaukee, Rock counties than GOP proposed

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Gov. Tony Evers' plan for new assistant district attorneys shifts some positions to Milwaukee and Rock counties — at the expense of others — compared to what Republicans had proposed in the budget.

Milwaukee County will get three new general purpose revenue-funded positions, while Rock County will add one under Evers' plan compared to what Republicans had proposed.

Meanwhile, the counties of Columbia, Fond du Lac, Manitowoc, Marathon and Monroe will all add positions under the plan compared to current staffing levels. But each will get one fewer additional position compared to what Republicans included in their budget before Evers vetoed their allocation plan.

In Tuesday's announcement, Evers touted the first full-time GPR-funded assistant DA positions added in the state in more than 10 years, calling it a "historic" investment that will improve services.

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"For far too long our county district attorney offices have been doing more with less," Evers said.

But GOP state Rep. Mark Born, a member of the Joint Finance Committee who has worked on assistant DA staffing issues, charged Evers was benefiting Milwaukee County with his proposal even though a study shows it already has enough staffers to handle the workload. Meanwhile, that same study showed the counties who would've done better under the GOP plan will still be short of the needed positions

to handle their workloads.

“Taking a position from a high-need rural county to give them to Milwaukee County, that is overstaffed according to that study, I think that’s a concern,” said Born, R-Beaver Dam.

In all, the plan announced yesterday means 56 counties will receive 64.95 additional full-time equivalent positions. But the allocation of 30.1 positions had already been spelled out in the budget Evers signed in July. Republicans included in their version of the budget an allocation for the other 34.85, but Evers vetoed the earmarks for those jobs while keeping the authority to add them.

Tuesday’s announcement fills out where those 34.85 positions will go.

In his recommendation to Evers, DOA Secretary Joel Brennan wrote the agency took a “holistic review” in divvying up the positions based on DA requests, staffing needs for treatment alternatives and diversion programs, and other issues.

Still, the latest analysis of the workload for Wisconsin’s DA offices found Milwaukee had 115 percent of the full-time equivalent positions it needed to handle caseloads as of Aug. 8, 2018, while Rock County was at 86 percent.

By comparison, the five counties that fared worse under Evers’ plan than the GOP proposal ranged from 41 percent of the staff needed to handle caseloads to 62 percent.

Monroe County, which was at 41 percent, needed 4.25 FTE positions to reach 100 percent of staffing needed. Under Evers’ plan, it will get one additional position.

Marathon County was at 62 percent with a need for 6.73 more positions, but will get 3.5 under the Evers approach.

The other changes in the Evers plan compared to the GOP proposal include: Bayfield County adding 0.1 FTE, Green County adding 0.1 FTE, Washington County adding 0.4 FTE and Sheboygan County adding 0.5 FTE. Meanwhile, Ozaukee County will get 0.1 fewer FTE under Evers’ approach compared to the GOP plan.

Portage County DA Louis Molepske, president of the Wisconsin District Attorneys Association, said the additional prosecutor positions are welcome, though more needs to be done after years of the state Capitol not addressing caseloads.

“This is a very impressive down payment on 30 years of lack of funding this program for FTEs,” said Molepske, a former Dem member of the Assembly.

He also cautioned against solely relying on the caseload study in determining which counties should’ve been awarded the additional assistant DAs.

During the budget process, Evers had proposed switching three positions funded in the Milwaukee County DA’s office to GPR rather than through program revenue such as grants. But Republicans rejected the move.

Molepske said providing GPR funding for those positions under Evers’ proposal will alleviate any fears that the grant funding could dry up. He also noted while the caseload study found Milwaukee County was fully staffed to meet needs, that metric didn’t take into account efforts such as finding more treatment and diversion options, which help alleviate overcrowding in jails and prisons.

Molepske also said every DA who had requested additional position authority got a boost under the final plan.

“At the end of the day, it should make all these DAs very happy,” Molepske said. “Most importantly, the allocations are done without partisanship in mind.”

See the plan:

<https://www.wispolitics.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/190917DA.pdf>