

# Fitzgerald says Evers has failed to reach across the aisle on bipartisan policy goals

Posted on Friday, Oct 25, 2019

Senate Majority Leader and 5th CD candidate Scott Fitzgerald says the hallmark of the fall session would be GOP lawmakers “playing goalie” by blocking the legislative priorities of Gov. Tony Evers.

Speaking at a WisPolitics.com luncheon in Madison Thursday, Fitzgerald, R-Juneau, accused the governor of failing to reach out to lawmakers to pursue bipartisan policy.

Harkening back to days of former Gov. Jim Doyle’s administration when former Dem Sen. Russ Decker served as the majority leader, Fitzgerald said there was a period of time where “we’d go across the hallway and we’d come up with some things and we’d work through them.”

“I still don’t believe as we sit here today that that type of administration exists in the East Wing right now,” he said. “There’s no overtures being made and if they are being made, there doesn’t seem to be a lot of follow-through.”

**>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

But an Evers spokeswoman countered by releasing a thread of correspondence from the gov’s office to the offices of Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, R-Rochester and Fitzgerald showing Evers administration officials trying to coordinate meetings with GOP leadership in the late stages of budget negotiations this summer and while developing measures to counteract gun violence this fall.

The spokeswoman indicated there was no further correspondence in any of the email threads.

Still, Fitzgerald said it would be up to Evers to come to lawmakers with proposals that could garner bipartisan support.

“But it just hasn’t materialized up until this point so I think, you know, we’ve kind of gone to our own corners,” he said.

That includes the debate on gun violence legislation, which Fitzgerald called a “non-starter” among Republican lawmakers.

Evers on Monday signed an executive order calling a special session of the Legislature starting Nov. 7 to consider bills that institute wide-ranging background checks on firearm purchases and so-called “red-flag” laws. But Fitzgerald and Vos immediately rejected that directive.

The Juneau Republican again pledged to gavel in and out of the session without considering the bills, a decision he said driven by conversations he and Vos had with GOP lawmakers.

“We’ve had a lot of time to kind of dialogue with members, see if there isn’t something that maybe they’re more comfortable with and the answer is I think, no, they’re not,” he said. “They’re just not there, members aren’t there. They don’t want to mess with this stuff.”

Asked about a proposed tax cut he floated a month ago during an appearance on “UpFront,” Fitzgerald opened the door to bipartisan negotiations “any topic or subject.”

“I would never say that that can’t happen because it probably can happen,” he said. “But ... that topic hasn’t necessarily shown itself or ... I have not felt a necessity to reach out and try to negotiate something like that.”

The Juneau Republican also said he could “envision a place where there’s people that are never confirmed” to serve as cabinet secretaries.

The Senate has so far confirmed just five of Evers picks to lead state agencies: Peter Barca at Revenue, Joel Brennan at Administration, Kathy Blumenfeld at Financial Institutions, Kevin Carr at Corrections and Mary Kolar at Veterans Affairs.

Still, it took more than nine months for those agency heads to receive their confirmation votes, the result of a “rocky start” to the relationship between Evers

and the Senate GOP caucus according to Fitzgerald.

“It took a while I think for the caucus to get into a frame of mind where they would even consider taking up some of the cabinet members,” he said.

Fitzgerald said Senate Republicans planned to caucus later yesterday and indicated he intended to “see if we can’t build a list of individuals that’ll be confirmed.”

But he said his caucus was still not comfortable with some of the nominations Evers has brought forward and warned that “if we took the vote, there’ll be people voting no” on some of the gov’s picks, though he did not specify which of the secretaries he was speaking about.

Agency heads serve at the pleasure of the governor and can carry out their duties without being confirmed by the Senate.