

GOP leaders close out gov's special session calls on guns without taking up bills

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GOP legislative leaders late Thursday quickly dismissed Tony Evers' call for a special session on new gun restrictions and shrugged off criticism they were ignoring the will of voters by failing to even debate the two bills the gov urged them to take up.

With largely just reporters watching, Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald, R-Juneau, gaveled his chamber in and out of the special session in 30 seconds with no other members on the floor.

Meanwhile, the Assembly gaveled in and out of special session within 15 seconds — over the vocal objection from Dems — shortly after wrapping up its regular floor period.

Evers slammed the moves, suggesting Republicans “did so at their own peril” because they would have to go back to their districts to explain their failure to act.

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“Republicans essentially just told 80 percent of Wisconsinites and a majority of gun owners, ‘go jump in a lake,’ because they didn’t have the courage to take a vote — much less have a dialogue — on two bills about universal background checks and extreme risk protection orders that we know can save lives,” Evers said.

But Fitzgerald told reporters all 19 Senate Republicans oppose the universal background check bill and one to impose a new red-flag law, raising Second Amendment concerns about both.

Fitzgerald said the chamber would call itself back immediately if there were a clear legislative solution to the mass shootings that have rocked various parts of the country.

“I don’t think these bills solve the issue of gun violence,” Fitzgerald said.

While the Assembly didn’t take up the gun bills that Evers wanted, it plowed through a calendar that includes three attempts to override partial vetoes. Minority Leader Gordon Hintz, D-Oshkosh, slammed the override attempts as “nothing more than cover for Republican cowardice on the firearms issue.”