

Nygren says JFC not looking to add wedding barn regulations to state budget

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Joint Finance Committee Co-Chair Rep. John Nygren is strongly denying a charge that the state's budget panel is looking to "(smuggle) into the budget" an amendment that would put in place new regulations on so-called wedding barns.

The Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty was among a coalition of groups that in a letter yesterday asserted that "there may be an effort underway" to include language in the state budget that would force the venues to obtain a liquor license before allowing consumption of alcohol on the premises. The Department of Revenue currently does not require wedding barns to hold such permits.

But in a tweet, the Marinette Republican called the contention "a boldface lie" and suggested that WILL was "looking to fundraise on this issue."

WILL later indicated the letter was not specifically targeting Nygren or JFC members. Rather, the group had heard from sources inside the Capitol that the Tavern League — a trade group representing bars, taverns and restaurants that has been staunchly opposed to unlicensed wedding barns — is pushing for the measure to be added through the 999 motion. That's typically the final addition to the budget while it is before the finance panel.

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"It's unfortunate special interests have been considering a secret attempt to do so," said WILL Executive Vice President CJ Szafir.

The letter, WILL said, was an effort to prevent that from happening. The conservative group indicated that Nygren's tweet actually showed they were on the

same page as the JFC.

The issue of regulating wedding barns has been brewing for some time, even drawing a last-minute attempt last session to change state law. But that effort was dropped, and a study committee on the topic didn't get anywhere.

Outgoing AG Brad Schimel issued a nonbinding informal opinion late last year that wedding barns needed a liquor license, a break with longstanding state practice. But a spokeswoman for Gov. Tony Evers indicated in March that the administration would not support such a change.

Read the letter:

<https://www.wispolitics.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/190609Letter.pdf>