

# Senate approves new procedures for handling rape test kits

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The Senate unanimously signed off on creating a statutory procedure for handling, processing and storing rape test kits.

It also unanimously backed a new process to notify victims how their kits are being handled.

The bills come on the heels of a backlog of untested kits becoming an issue in the 2018 race for attorney general. Dem Josh Kaul repeatedly slammed former GOP AG Brad Schimel for the building of the backlog under the incumbent's watch. Schimel countered by pointing to progress that had been made during his term in wiping it out.

Now, there is no state law laying out how rape test kits are handled.

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SB 200, which cleared on a voice vote would:

\*require health care professionals to notify law enforcement within 24 hours of collecting a rape kit if a victim wants to report the assault. If the victim doesn't want it reported, the kit still would have to be sent to state crime labs within 72 hours.

\*place new requirements on law enforcement agencies to take possession of a kit within 72 hours if an assault has been reported and sent it to the state crime labs within 14 days for processing;

\*set new standards for storing kits. That includes for 10 years if the victim hasn't consented to analysis and 50 years or the date of the expiration of the statute of limitations, for those who do.

Meanwhile, SB 332 would appropriate \$400,000 in 2020-21 for the proposed Wisconsin Sexual Assault Kit Tracking System. The database would allow victims to obtain information related to the location and status of kits, as well as information about its eventual destruction.

The bill cleared 33-0.

“It empowers victims and survivors,” said Sen. Patty Schachtner, D-Somerset.