

# Assembly passes sexual assault kit bill

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A divided Assembly voted along party lines to move forward with a bill that would put guidelines in place for the collection, testing and storage of sexual assault kits.

But Dems accused Assembly GOP lawmakers of playing politics with a similar bipartisan proposal by adding “poison pill” provisions such as the requirement that law enforcement would notify U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement if a non-citizen who wasn’t authorized to be in the country was arrested for sexual assault.

Rep. Christine Sinicki labeled the move “disgusting.”

“This is not the issue that you should be playing political games with,” the Milwaukee Dem said.

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AB 844 contains language largely similar to the bipartisan AB 214, which would require the state crime lab to test all sexual assault kits, with the victim’s consent, and store them for up to 50 years. The earlier version of the bill passed the Senate by voice vote in October but progress fizzled without a public hearing in the Assembly Health Committee.

“This is what’s wrong with this body,” said Rep. Chris Taylor, D-Madison. “Leadership took strong bipartisan bills... and made them divisive and partisan.”

But Rep. Amy Loudenbeck countered Dems only complaints were over the process by which the bill was developed.

“I get it, you’re not happy with the politics,” the Clinton Republican said. “But I’m voting on the policy.”

And bill author Rep. David Steffen noted the language in AB 214 was “100 percent included” in AB 844.

“It’s like loving the Mona Lisa but wanting to throw it out because you put a new frame on it,” the Green Bay Republican said.

No organizations are registered in favor of AB 844, which passed 62-36, and has yet to receive a Senate companion.

The new bill, drafted last month, would also establish a sexual assault victim bill of rights and would allow a student victim of sexual assault by a teacher or other student to enter one of the state’s school choice programs even if they wouldn’t otherwise have been eligible.

The Wisconsin Alliance for Women’s Health, Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault, Planned Parenthood Advocates of Wisconsin and Wisconsin Nurses Association have all registered in opposition of the bill after first registering in favor of AB 214.

See the bill:

<https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2019/related/proposals/ab844>