

GOP legislative leaders eyeing tax cut amid budget surplus

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Republican legislative leaders say they are “in general” on the same page for passing a potential tax cut before the session wraps up.

Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, R-Rochester, said Wednesday at a Wisconsin Counties Association lawmaker roundtable that Republican Assembly members plan to possibly use a surplus to pay off debts, cut property taxes and offer “more robust” aid to the struggling ag industry than what Gov. Tony Evers proposed in his State of the State address.

“Eight-and-a-half million is a nice number, but I think we can do something more significant for people in rural areas,” Vos told reporters afterward.

The Legislative Fiscal Bureau announced last month the state is now projected to take in an additional \$818.2 million in tax collections through mid-2021 than previously expected. After the projected deposits to the rainy day fund, the state is looking at an additional \$451.9 million in the general fund for the remainder of the 2019-21 budget.

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Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald said he has been an advocate for a property tax cut and that an income tax cut was a “long-term goal” of several caucus members.

“I’m hoping that in the next week or so we can sit down with the Assembly and kind of work through that and hopefully come up with a package that makes sense,” the Juneau Republican said.

Meanwhile, Assembly Minority Leader Gordon Hintz, D-Oshkosh, called the surplus

an opportunity to reconsider provisions removed from Evers' 2019-21 biennial budget proposal, such as expanding healthcare funding and mental health programs in schools.

Hintz also said the money should be used carefully in case the economy were to take a downturn in the near future.

"We're in the fifth straight month of manufacturing losing jobs which is technically a recession," Hintz said. "So, there are some indicators out there. I want us to be cautious in how we move forward in that regard."