

Wisconsin Department of Justice: To release more than 10,000 records to Republican lawmaker

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MADISON — The Wisconsin Department of Justice has reached a settlement on behalf of Gov. Tony Evers in a lawsuit filed by Republican state Rep. John Nygren, who initiated a costly legal battle with the governor's office rather than work collaboratively to resolve an overly broad request for public records.

The legislature has exempted itself from the open records laws that apply to the governor and hundreds of other government entities and officials around the state.

Rep. Nygren asked for every document that contained one or more common terms, such as "mental health" or the names of several lawmakers.

In an effort to spare the state more time and money being put into politicians suing one another, the Governor's Office has agreed to settle Rep. Nygren's lawsuit. The Governor's Office, with the help of DOJ staff, has been working to review and provide thousands upon thousands of pages of records. Those will continue to be provided as they are reviewed.

Under the terms of the settlement, the State of Wisconsin will pay Rep. Nygren's private attorneys \$40,000 in attorney fees, for what amounted to approximately three substantive court filings and a single telephone conference. By settling this lawsuit, the Evers Administration can focus on fighting the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic challenges facing Wisconsinites.

Simply put, while Rep. Nygren may have the time during this pandemic to let a lawsuit unnecessarily drag out in court, the Governor's office does not.