

# Assembly backs bill to cut aid payments to municipalities that reduce police funding, now heads to Evers

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The Assembly today voted to send to Gov. Tony Evers' desk a bill that would cut shared revenue payments to municipalities that cut funding for law enforcement.

The bill, passed on a 61-37 vote, would make the reduced shared revenue the amount the municipality would receive going forward. The bill would proportionally redistribute the funds to communities that did not reduce law enforcement funding.

The reductions do not apply to local governments that participate in shared law enforcement agreements with other local governments.

Rep. Nick Milroy, D-South Range, was the only Dem who voted in favor of the bill. He signed on today as a cosponsor.

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Bill author Rep. John Spiros, R-Marshfield, said the bill is meant to stop police departments from cutting experienced officers who they will likely need to replace with more, less experienced officers in the future.

He said replacing those officers would take too long and departments would only end up with less experienced officers.

"Our citizens are demanding safe neighborhoods, safe communities," Spiros said. "And you can't have that by cutting police personnel."

Rep. Janel Brandtjen, R-Menomonee Falls, said the bill is meant to make sure municipalities keep their communities safe. She added gangs and gun violence have become more widespread than ever, forcing residents away and ruining children's lives.

"That means that we need to have enough officers so that they can do their job," Brandtjen added.

Rep. LaKeshia Myers slammed Republicans for criticizing Milwaukee's spending on its police force and said Brandtjen was mischaracterizing life in Milwaukee.

The Milwaukee Dem knocked Republicans who she says have been working to strip Milwaukee of funding.

"If Milwaukee does not succeed, then the state does not succeed," she said.

Dem Rep. Lisa Subeck, D-Madison, said local governments "are in the perfect position" to make decisions about their budgets and where they need most to spend money. She said those governments know where to redistribute police funding to fund resources that help address problems police are not trained to deal with, such as mental health and family issues.

"Our model of policing is not designed so much to prevent crime as it is to react to crime," she said.

Vos also said this bill is one of the most important bills this session.

"I can't think of a single challenge that we face that will be solved by having fewer people protecting our communities," Vos said. "That's exactly what this legislation aims to address."

"For those that think this can't happen in Wisconsin, it already is," Vos said, pointing to Madison and Milwaukee cutting over one hundred police positions over the last year.

Rep. Mark Spreitzer, D-Beloit, called the bill "laughable" and criticized Republicans over shared revenue levels. He said state government funding should at least keep up with inflation, and that without sufficient shared revenue, local governments will be forced to do more with less.

“But you know what, you can’t do more with less,” he added. “Sometimes you just do less with less.”

See the bill here:

<https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2021/proposals/sb119>