

Assembly calls on AG to join multi-state lawsuit to overturn fed COVID relief policy

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The GOP-controlled Assembly today voted along party lines to direct Dem AG Josh Kaul to join a 13-state lawsuit seeking to overturn a federal ban on states accepting COVID relief money and then cutting taxes.

State Rep. Jodi Emerson, D-Eau Claire, on the floor accused Republicans of being hypocritical by typically calling for local control but then urging other branches of government to follow their suggestion.

She said if the Legislature really wanted the power to spend federal dollars, lawmakers should expand Medicaid, an issue state Republicans have avoided for nearly a decade.

“You’re not the governor and you’re not the attorney general,” Emerson said to Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, R-Rochester. “Let the executive branch do their job so we can do our job. Stop this power trip you’re on.”

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But Vos defended his position, arguing it’s a matter of state’s rights to decide how to run their own budget and not up to the feds.

He said Dems would be “going off your deep end” if the roles were reversed, with a hypothetical GOP-controlled Congress dictating budget policy to a Dem-controlled state Legislature.

The Senate is expected to take a similar step tomorrow when it’s on the floor.

But DOJ spokeswoman Gillian Drummond said while the Legislature can authorize and request the agency to join such a suit, it can't compel the AG to intervene.

She added, "We are not going to be joining the suit."