

Assembly passes bills backers say would ban critical race theory in schools, government employee training

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The Assembly passed along party lines in separate 60-38 votes two bills GOP-backers say would ban critical race theory from student lessons and training for state and local government employees.

Assembly Speaker Robin Vos and other GOP lawmakers during a meeting with reporters ahead of the floor session said the bills would keep critical race theory out of schools and guarantee racism and sexism are not taught to state employees.

AB 411 pertains to instruction in K-12 schools, while AB 414 applies to state and local government employee training.

Rep. LaKeshia Myers, D-Milwaukee, on the floor said her high school history book lessons about the “southern strategy” Republicans used to appeal to white voters in the civil rights era remind her of AB 411.

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“While I know those authors left those three words out of the bill, they were more than willing to talk about them during the hearings,” Myers said, referring to critical race theory.

She said lawmakers should not be talking about the concept when making laws regulating K-12 schools because it is terminology taught in law school only. She also said the bill would effectively allow defunding of certain schools based on parents and others being offended by certain teaching materials.

Rep. Jimmy Anderson, D-Fitchburg, referring to GOP backers of the bill, said “your words don’t match your actions.”

He said those lawmakers argue the measure would allow robust debate on sexism and racism in schools while banning the teaching of racist and sexist ideas. But Anderson argues the bill would effectively ban any conversations on such matters.

Bill author Rep. Chuck Wichgers, R-Muskego, said the bill would reinforce federal guidelines that bar teachers from teaching racist and sexist ideas in the classroom.

He added teachers “are going too far” with their lessons. He said the bill would give power back to parents and take away at least some power from educational professionals. He added Leg Council in committee hearings “squashed” what he called a false narrative from Dems that the bill would prohibit the teaching of history in classrooms.

Rep. Adam Neylon, R-Pewaukee, was absent during today’s floor debate. His spokesman, Dillon McGee, told WisPolitics.com he stayed home to tend to his sick child and await test results as a precautionary measure.