

Assembly passes bills on unemployment insurance, legislative human resources office and Milwaukee dredged material management facility

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The Assembly today passed three bills approved 14-0 by the Joint Finance Committee, sending them to the Senate.

AB 406 would prevent increases in unemployment insurance coverage costs for businesses over the next two years.

The bill, passed through a voice vote, comes as rates are expected to increase following a spike in unemployment claims during the COVID-19 pandemic. Republican lawmakers want to allocate \$120 million in state taxpayer funds to the unemployment fund through the budget so businesses don't face increases in coverage costs.

The Assembly also passed AB 407, which would create a nonpartisan legislative human resources office.

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Under the bill, also passed via voice vote, the office would review and investigate harassment, discrimination, retaliation, violence and bullying allegations against legislators, legislative employees and legislative service agency employees. The office's director would be appointed by and report to the Republican-controlled Joint Legislative Organization Committee. The bill passed the Joint Finance Committee

14-0.

It's unclear if open records laws would apply to the office's investigative findings. The bill states the office should "at all times observe the confidential nature of records, requests, advice, complaints, reviews, investigations, disciplinary actions, and other information in its possession relating to human resources matters."

AB 408 would approve a dredged material management facility for the Milwaukee Estuary.

The bill, passed via voice vote, would allow the commission that governs the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District to adopt a resolution by the end of this year to fund a dredged material management facility before 2032. The Milwaukee Estuary was designated an Area of Concern in 1987 due to historical modifications and pollutant loads that contributed toxic contaminants.

The bill would require the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District's capital budget levy increases to be at or below 3 percent through 2027 with the exception of emergency circumstances. The commission would pay for all the dredged material management facility project costs through its capital budget and may finance the project by issuing bonds or notes made payable within 35 years.