

# Assembly passes bill that would give JFC say over opioid settlements

Posted on Tuesday, Jun 22, 2021

Assembly lawmakers approved along party lines a bill that would put in place guidelines on how the state should handle lawsuit settlements from opioid manufacturers.

The bill would require any settlements on the suit between the AG and local governments and opioid manufacturers, marketers or distributors to first be approved by JFC. It would also require 30 percent of the settlement to go to state coffers, with the remaining 70 percent split between local governments.

Dem AG Josh Kaul in 2019 joined a multi-state lawsuit against opioid manufacturers alleging they're responsible in part for the deadly opioid epidemic which has rocked the nation. While settlement totals are still unknown, officials in the bill's public hearing suggested it will be in the hundreds of millions of dollars and that payments should start coming in later this summer or in fall.

Kaul has opposed the bill due to its measures giving final approval to JFC.

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Bill author Rep. Jon Plumer, R-Lodi, was the only lawmaker to speak ahead of the vote. He said his bill puts Wisconsinites in the "best spot" to receive the most out of opioid settlements.

"The opposition would have less incentive to settle without this legislation," he said, suggesting the unity the bill brings between counties and the state makes settlements easier.

The Wisconsin Counties Association and other local governments have come out in support of the measure. But officials during the public hearing said local

governments do not want to get involved in the bill's more politically divisive aspects that would give more power to the GOP-controlled Joint Finance Committee.

The bill passed the Assembly 60-38. It now goes to the Senate for approval.

See the bill here:

<https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2021/proposals/reg/asm/bill/ab37>