

Assembly passes workforce housing bills

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The Assembly also passed seven bills aimed at increasing workforce housing, which supporters argued would help address the state's labor shortage.

One bill would require property value assessors to focus their valuations on the actual market value of homes and ban certain property tax assessment practices. Another bill approved in a voice vote would give the Legislature more say over local zoning policies for workforce housing.

The only bill that received a roll call would require at least \$1 million in ARPA funds go toward workforce housing projects. It passed 59-35 along party lines. Reps. Lisa Subeck, D-Madison, Mark Spreitzer, D-Beloit, and Gary Tauchen, R-Bonduel, did not vote.

Other bills would:

- *certify certain workforce housing project plans as shovel-ready;
- *create a sales tax exemption for building materials used in workforce housing projects;
- *create a loan program to fund improvements on existing workforce housing; and
- *allow municipalities to designate certain properties as housing investment fund properties and collect tax revenues on any valuation increases on properties.

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Proponents of the bills argued in last week's public hearing the lack of workforce housing in Wisconsin needs to be addressed because it's contributing to the workforce shortage and homelessness.

Opponents objected to changes in the way property values are assessed under the legislation. They also argued the bills would usurp local government's ability to

determine land-use policy.

AB 604, also part of the workforce housing package, was originally on the calendar, but didn't receive a floor vote. It would allow the state to create authorized local campsites for the homeless. It also would criminalize camping on public land that isn't designated for camping. And it would require the state to allocate \$300,000 in federal COVID-19 funds to pay for more local navigators to help the homeless find housing.

Author Rep. Alex Dallman, R-Green Lake, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.