

Badger Institute: Gov. Evers signs bill requiring transparency in police hiring

Posted on Wednesday, Nov 10, 2021

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Nov. 10, 2021 – Gov. Tony Evers yesterday signed into law a police transparency bill that will require the disclosure of employment files when police officers move from one department to another. The measure passed the Legislature with overwhelming bipartisan support.

The bill was the fourth in a package of police reform and transparency bills that were recommended by the Badger Institute last year and signed into law over the past few months.

“These are wins for the people of Wisconsin,” said Badger Institute Senior Vice President Michael Jahr. “While our research shows that police use force infrequently in the state, it’s still important to have clear and accurate information when they do. Wisconsinites, lawmakers, public officials and the media will be better informed and can make better decisions with these reforms in place.”

The measure signed yesterday will help law enforcement agencies identify officers with disciplinary or other issues before they’re hired.

Two bills requiring public reporting of police use-of-force policies and the publishing of annual reports and data on use-of-force incidents were signed into law in June. Legislation establishing a statewide standard for defining use-of-force incidents was signed into law in August.

The Badger Institute in 2020 published research that showed police use-of-force incidents were relatively rare in the state’s three biggest cities, but also found that the definitions and tracking methods were widely varied and difficult to access. At the time, the institute recommended reforms that were eventually adopted in these four measures.