

# Both houses vote to end enhanced federal unemployment benefits

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Both houses of the Legislature today voted along party lines to end enhanced federal unemployment benefits even as Gov. Tony Evers has signaled he will veto the bill.

Assembly Republicans acknowledged that ending the extra \$300 a week in UI wouldn't be a silver bullet to address the state's labor shortage. But they said it's one way to start forcing more people to join the workforce, arguing some state residents haven't bothered to seek a job due to the additional benefits.

The bill would require the governor and Department of Workforce Development to terminate the state's participation in the federal program.

Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, R-Rochester, on the floor said part of the problem with the employment shortage is that state politicians like Evers have "bare-bones" personal experience on how the private sector works. Vos said many of the employees at his gourmet popcorn factory have been working double shifts because of the lack of line workers.

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"We are killing many of these small businesses that are just trying to struggle to survive," Vos said.

But Dems shot back arguing Republicans have only offered anecdotal stories that the benefits are hindering employment instead of providing documented proof. Instead, they said lawmakers should focus on boosting child care benefits and public transportation funding if they really wanted to address the labor shortage.

Minority Leader Rep. Gordon Hintz, D-Oshkosh, blamed the shortage on the last

decade of Republican dominance in state politics scaring people away from the state. He cited recent reports of a greater-than-expected decline in the state in working-age people since 2010.

“The reality is Wisconsin has a people shortage; there’s simply not enough people moving to Wisconsin,” he said. “What you guys were selling has chased people out of the state.”

Meanwhile, Evers has already indicated he intends to veto the bill should it reach his desk.

The bill passed the Assembly 60-37 and the Senate 20-12. There was no debate in the Senate ahead of the vote.