

# Evers calls GOP concerns over Afghan refugee vetting 'dog-whistle crap'

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Gov. Tony Evers called Republican lawmakers' concerns about the vetting process for Afghan refugees arriving at Fort McCoy "dog-whistle crap."

Evers said those GOP lawmakers are either misinformed about the subject or trying to label children and Afghans who have aided U.S. forces as terrorists.

"They like to raise the specter of maybe some of those little kids that I saw at Fort McCoy are terrorists," Evers said during a press conference Monday, adding that he is confident in the existing vetting process.

State and congressional GOP lawmakers visited Fort McCoy last week, including U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson, who said on WISN-TV's 'UpFront' he believes the majority of those refugees will arrive "for the right reason," but remains worried "if somebody slips through and commits an act of terror."

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State Sen. Pat Testin, R-Stevens Point, sent a letter to Evers seeking details on the refugees coming into Fort McCoy and visited the base last week. He said Evers has yet to respond.

"Rather than hurl accusations, it would be nice if the governor would get answers to some of the questions we asked," he said.

Evers spoke with reporters in Madison as part of an effort to highlight Dems' "Build Back Better" plan. That includes the broadband expansion efforts he said have added high-speed internet access to 250,000 homes since he was elected and

pandemic-recovery funds for businesses, tourism and farmers.

Evers also praised the expanded Child Tax Credit and its potential to cut child poverty in half. Democratic Party of Wisconsin Chair Ben Wikler criticized Republicans for voting against the program, adding that “fight is not over” since it will be voted on again next year.

Republicans said Evers’ press conference, held to highlight Dems’ successes since the election of President Joe Biden, was poorly timed.

“Wisconsin Democrats and the DNC should be ashamed of themselves for taking an undeserved victory lap after Joe Biden’s botched withdrawal from Afghanistan cost 13 service members their lives,” said RNC spokesperson Preya Samsundar, referring to the suicide bombings near Kabul Airport that also killed at least 160 Afghans.

Evers also criticized Republicans for going ahead with inquiries into the 2020 presidential election, noting that “things changed” when Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, R-Rochester, visited former President Donald Trump last week.

“Apparently they’re all drinking the Kool-Aid,” Evers said. “It’s a lot of money. And it’s a lot of wasted money.”

The Assembly Org Committee Monday approved 5-3 along party lines a motion to give Speaker Robin Vos the power to put former Justice Michael Gableman in charge of an Office of Special Counsel overseeing a 2020 election probe.

The Rochester Republican had earlier signed a contract with Gableman in June paying him \$44,000 over a four-month period. He has since expanded the scope of Gableman’s work and said he’s setting a cap of \$680,000 in taxpayer money.

Assembly Minority Leader Gordon Hintz, D-Oshkosh, slammed the expanded contract.

Former state and national GOP Chair Reince Priebus went on Steve Bannon’s show last week and announced lawmakers had approved \$680,000 for the review, that outside money would also be used to cover the costs of the probe and that subpoenas would go out within a couple of weeks. Vos later said no private money would be used for the investigation.

Hintz questioned how Priebus was privy to details of the work before it was publicly

announced and whether it was a sign the probe is nothing more than a charade to placate Trump and his supporters.

“History will judge this time and this leadership as a total disgrace to this time and to our democracy,” Hintz said.

A Vos spokeswoman didn't immediately return a request for comment.