

Evers vetoes 11 GOP bills directing federal COVID-19 aid spending

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Gov. Tony Evers has vetoed 11 GOP-authored bills directing how to spend federal money from the latest COVID-19 relief package and announced how he plans to dole out another \$420 million of the funds.

Appearing at a news conference in Wauwatosa Thursday, Evers said he vetoed the 11 GOP bills to ensure he can distribute federal pandemic relief funds as quickly as possible. He said the legislative oversight process would likely delay those funds from getting to businesses and Wisconsinites who need them.

“This money has to get out quickly,” he said. “It’s much more easy and direct if it’s not going through 100 hands in the Legislature, versus one administration that has done this several times already.”

Senate Majority Leader Devin LeMahieu, R-Oostburg, slammed the gov’s move, which had been expected.

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“The governor just sent a clear message to the people of Wisconsin that they will have little to no say in how their federal tax dollars are spent,” LeMahieu said.

Evers last month announced he planned to use \$2.5 billion of the \$3.2 billion the state will receive for economic recovery. That included \$600 million for small businesses.

The \$420 million announced Thursday is part of that \$600 million pot and will go out to small businesses through the Wisconsin Tomorrow Small Business Recovery Grant Program. Businesses with gross revenues of between \$10,000 and \$7 million are eligible for the \$5,000 grants.

The gov's office said details of the new business grants won't be finalized until after federal guidance for the stimulus money is in place. Still, it believes targeting small businesses fits with the requirements of the federal money.

The administration is also awaiting final guidance to ensure two other announcements this week meet the requirements: \$175 million for COVID-19 testing in schools and \$50 million for more learning opportunities and health programs for kids.

In his 11 veto messages, the gov cited questions on whether the GOP proposals would meet federal muster in nixing the bills. He called it an "unnecessary risk" to put into law spending priorities that may violate federal rules, and he knocked the bills for limiting the state's flexibility with the funds to address possible unforeseen challenges.

Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, R-Rochester, pressed Evers to present more details on how he plans to spend the federal money.

"I'm glad he announced help for small businesses, but where is the rest of the money?" Vos said. "Making vague promises in a press release is not a plan and Wisconsin deserves transparency in this decision-making process."

The GOP bills would have spent \$1.1 billion to issue 10% property tax rebate checks to property owners in the state, \$500 million on expanding broadband internet access and \$150 million on improving long-term care facilities and over \$1 billion on other areas.

See more on the 11 GOP bills [here](#).

See the release [here](#).