

Evers vetoes personal property tax repeal, bill to finance loans to purchase 2 shuttered paper mills

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Gov. Tony Evers vetoed legislation that would repeal the personal property tax for businesses, though \$202.4 million to replace the lost revenue if the tax was repealed will remain in the budget.

It was one of four bills Evers vetoed yesterday, including one that sought to direct him to use \$65 million in American Rescue Plan Act funds to finance the purchase of two paper mills.

On the personal property tax bill, Evers said while in Whitefish Bay he does support eliminating the tax and funds in the budget could still be used for future legislation on the issue.

He said the Legislature-approved tax elimination is not a “clean” bill and some municipalities have questions about how it might impact companies with out-of-state manufacturing, railroads and utilities.

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Republicans have pushed to get rid of the tax for years, but the latest bill didn't gain momentum until after the additional \$4.4 billion in projected surplus revenue came to light. The Evers administration raised late concerns about the bill with Republicans agreeing to some changes before passing it last week, but not all that had been requested.

Joint Finance Co-chair Mark Born, R-Beaver Dam, said he believed Republicans would again introduce legislation either this session or in a future session to repeal the tax.

"I think the Legislature has been interested in getting rid of the personal property tax for a couple of decades," he said. "I'm sure we'll continue to be interested in that. I don't know what the governor means by compromise."

Evers wrote in his veto message he nixed AB 367 because it wanted to use ARPA funds to finance the loans for the mills rather than general purpose revenue.

The bill sought to direct the federal money through the Wisconsin Economic Development Corp. to finance the purchase of the Verso Paper Mill in Wisconsin Rapids and the Park Falls Pulp and Paper Mill in Park Falls.

Evers wrote in his veto message it wasn't clear the U.S. The Department of Treasury would permit ARPA funds to be used in that way. He added "ARPA is not a reliable funding source to provide the long-term assistance needed to revive these mills and provide stable jobs to their workers."

Sen. Pat Testin, R-Stevens Point, argued Evers has the authority to allocate the ARPA funds to help the effort and it's "past time to act."

State Rep. Scott Krug, R-Nekoosa, added, "He says that he supports the mill - in theory. There's nothing theoretical to the harm that he's doing to the mill workers, loggers, and their families."

The gov also vetoed AB 407, which sought to create a Legislative Human Resources Office because it would shield documents from the open records law.

And he voted AB 383, writing he objected to "the Legislature's insertion into the decision-making process of a private, member-driven organization." The bill sought to allow students to play sports immediately if they transferred because their original school switched to virtual instruction due to COVID-19. Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association rules typically require students who transfer to wait a year to play sports unless they changed schools because their parents moved.

Evers also signed a dozen bills, including one eliminating the need to obtain a barbering or cosmetology license to practice natural hair braiding.

[See the release.](#)