

GOP lawmakers pass 11-bill package allocating most of \$3.2B in federal pandemic relief

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Republican lawmakers passed along party lines their 11-bill package that would allocate federal pandemic relief funds.

Assembly Republicans during a floor session today said they are pushing the package through the Legislature as a message to Gov. Evers on how their constituents want to spend the \$3.2 billion in federal funds. They said the package, now headed to the Senate, is aimed at giving money back to taxpayers because it was their money in the first place.

Those bills would spend \$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.

However, the Legislative Fiscal Bureau recently announced bills that would spend \$308 million rebuilding highways and bridges, \$53 million on modernizing the state's emergency communication system and \$500 million on paying down state debt likely violate rules attached to the federal funds.

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Taxpayers will likely be on the hook with the federal government for that money if Wisconsin breaks those rules in spending the federal dollars.

“So let's send some of that money back to the hard-working people of Wisconsin through rebates to households and property owners, aid to households [and] put some money back in the pockets of the people in Wisconsin,” said JFC Co-Chair

Mark Born, R-Beaver Dam. “Because I know with great certainty that they can spend that money better than anyone in this room and definitely a lot better than Governor Evers can.”

But Rep. Deb Andraca, D-Whitefish Bay, said Republicans could use a more modern form of communication to get through.

“Why use the legislative process to send a signal to the governor?” she rhetorically asked. “Why not just pick up the phone?”

Dem lawmakers proposed amendments to each bill that would have reintroduced a statewide mask requirement similar to to gov’s previous mask mandates. None of those amendments passed.

Some of those Dems slammed their colleagues on the right for playing politics by introducing the package late in the week before a holiday. They said the GOP plan was just a response to Evers’ own plan to spend the money.