

Senate confirms four of Evers' cabinet picks

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The Senate today confirmed four members of Gov. Tony Evers' cabinet, including two who have been waiting since early 2019 for a vote.

Evers announced his picks of Dawn Crim to lead the Department of Safety and Professional Services and Craig Thompson at Transportation before he was sworn into office in early January 2019.

The Senate signed off on Crim's nomination 29-2 while backing Thompson's 27-4.

During her confirmation hearing this spring, GOP lawmakers knocked Crim's handling of the building oversight process. During her 2019 confirmation hearing, Crim addressed questions about a more than decade-old child abuse charge for poking her son's hand with a pen, causing it to bleed.

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Thompson, meanwhile, faced objections from some Republicans because he worked for the road building industry prior to his appointment.

GOP Sens. Julian Bradley, of Franklin, and Steve Nass, of Whitewater, voted against Crim's nomination. Bradley and Nass were joined by GOP Sens. Chris Kapenga, of Deerfield, and Duey Stroebel, of Saukville, in voting against Thompson's appointment.

No one spoke on the appointments ahead of today's votes.

Missy Hughes at the Wisconsin Economic Development Corp. and Randy Romanski at the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection were approved unanimously.

Evers appointed Hughes to the post in early fall 2019 after GOP lawmakers stripped him of the power to appoint the agency's leader for the first seven months of his term. Evers tapped Romanski to lead DATCP after the Senate rejected the nomination of Brad Pfaff, now a state senator representing a western Wisconsin seat.

Evers said ahead of the votes it was "about time" that the Senate approved the appointments and knocked GOP senators for refusing to move on his picks to serve on the Natural Resources Board.

That refusal has allowed Chair Frederick Prehn to continue to serve on the board even though his term ended in May. He has said he will serve until the Senate confirms a successor, and Dem AG Josh Kaul's lawsuit seeking to force him off the board was rejected by a Dane County judge.

That has allowed appointments of former Gov. Scott Walker to continue to have a 4-3 majority on the board. Both of Evers' appointments to the DNR Board remain in Senate Org, which typically doesn't have public hearings or meet in person. Evers appointee Sharon Adams, a community organizer, has been able to begin serving on the board because the Walker appointee she was nominated to replace stepped down.

"It just slows down the process, and it makes us look like idiots as a state, and there's no reason for us to look like idiots," Evers said. "We have people who want to do the work. I'm the governor, I've appointed them, so let's have at it."

Altogether, the Senate approved 38 appointments, including Dan Carlton as administrator for the Ethics Commission and Joaquin Altoro as executive director of the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority. Both were all confirmed unanimously.