

Speaker Vos: Legislative leaders circulate truth in spending act

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Madison...Assembly Speaker Robin Vos (R-Rochester) and Senate Majority Leader Devin LeMahieu (R-Oostburg) were joined by members of legislative leadership in putting forward a bill to ensure that the people of Wisconsin have a voice in how billions of federal dollars are spent. The state of Wisconsin is projected to receive \$5.5 billion from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. The Truth in Spending Act will allow Wisconsinites through their elected representatives to have a say in the allocation of recovery funds in their communities.

“Billions of taxpayer dollars should not be in the hands of a single person. We’re simply asking that the Governor include others in the decision-making process,” said Speaker Vos. “Not only will this legislation allow for more public input, it will also provide a new level of transparency.”

The legislation is modeled closely after the language that Democrats approved in 2009 to allow the Joint Finance Committee (JFC) to provide oversight in the distribution of funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. However, flexibilities have been added to make the approvals more expeditious via the committee’s passive review process.

“Oversight of tax dollars is an essential function of the Legislative Branch. Without it, we risk losing important considerations that come from elected representatives and residents from around the state,” said Leader LeMahieu. “Our oversight plan ensures quick delivery of needed relief while balancing the long-term health of our people and our future.”

Other states have also pursued similar measures in light of the COVID-19 pandemic or already had similar measures in place. [West Virginia](#), [Arkansas](#), [Colorado](#) and [Kansas](#) have recently passed or pursued legislation that gives some legislative oversight over COVID relief funds. In 12 states, the executive branch may receive but cannot spend unanticipated federal funds without prior authorization or subsequent legislative approval. In six states, the executive and legislative branch sit together on a board to share decision-making on unanticipated federal funds. Additionally, there have been [other states](#) that may not have been required to, but chose to include the legislature. These states include Alaska, Idaho, Maine, Mississippi and Tennessee.

“This bill is not usual or unprecedented; it’s common sense legislation,” said the Leaders. “We look forward to having a transparent approach to the pandemic recovery in Wisconsin.”