

Senate unanimously backs funding for new juvenile prison; Vos doubts will make Assembly floor

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The Senate voted unanimously to authorize \$41.8 million in general fund supported borrowing to build a new juvenile detention facility in Milwaukee County to house the most serious offenders in the system.

But Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, R-Rochester, said it's unlikely SB 520 will see a floor vote in his chamber before session ends.

Ahead of the Senate vote, Vos blamed Dem Gov. Tony Evers for the lack of progress on selecting a site in Milwaukee County to build a new Type 1 juvenile facility. Vos said it's unlikely the Assembly will vote to spend the money without knowing exactly where it's going.

"If you remember, they tried on the northwest side of Milwaukee, faced intense opposition and really have done nothing since," he said. "So it's very challenging for us to just say we're going to pass it on with a bunch of money without a site to actually have it go to without the diligence that happens."

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Rep. Evan Goyke, D-Milwaukee, in an interview with WisPolitics.com after the press conference slammed Vos for being the lone lawmaker "standing in the way of progress on the issue."

"The real reason is pure, terrible, cynical election-year politics," he said. "I mean it is arguably the worst and most expensive campaign tactic that we will see this year."

Gov. Scott Walker in 2018 signed legislation to close the juvenile prisons by January 2021. With little progress on the new juvenile detention system, Evers signed an extension to July 2021. But the state has yet to fund the Type 1 facility that's part of the plan, which includes counties opening new regional facilities to house less serious offenders.

SB 520 includes a provision that would require approval from the Republican-led Joint Finance Committee on a construction site before the money could be spent. The Assembly version cleared the Corrections Committee in that house 9-1.