

Assembly approves reckless driving legislation with bipartisan support

Posted on Wednesday, Mar 22, 2023

The Assembly today approved a pair of bills aimed at combatting reckless driving by increasing penalties and allowing police to impound vehicles.

One measure would double the fines and imprisonment penalties for various types of reckless driving and add \$485 in surcharges for those found guilty. The other would allow municipalities to impound vehicles involved in reckless driving.

Lawmakers approved 85-12 the penalty increase, AB 55, with 23 Dems joining Republicans in favor. The Assembly also passed 85-12 the impounding bill, SB 92, with 23 Dems in favor.

AB 55 heads to the Senate for consideration, while SB 92 goes to Gov. Tony Evers' desk.

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Gov. Tony Evers has said he will sign the bills. Assembly Speaker Robin Vos at a press conference ahead of today's session said he was not surprised, but that the gov should also sign the other crime-related bills the Assembly voted on today.

"It's actually not a surprise that we are close to an election where they have put all their chips on someone who is weak on crime and wants to let dangerous people out of jail," the Rochester Republican said.

Rep. Supreme Moore Omokunde, D-Milwaukee, argued the rising reckless driving issue would be better addressed through other means, not just a penalty hike.

"It will take a plan that involves increased mental health resources, reengineering our streets to be even safer for drivers, walkers and cyclists, and most importantly,

engaging and educating our communities,” he said.

Still, he applauded author Rep. Bob Donovan, R-Greenfield, for working to combat the issue, but he hopes Donovan also joins other efforts to stop reckless driving.

Rep. Christine Sinicki, D-Milwaukee, blasted Republicans supporting the bill, arguing the measure is just another attempt to bring down her hometown and allow people from other parts of the state to govern the city.

“Milwaukee is not the hellhole you want it to be,” she said. “I will not sit here day after day and watch you criticize Milwaukee.”

Author Rep. Bob Donovan, R-Greenfield, in his first floor speech said “this bill sends a message to criminals that this behavior will no longer be tolerated, and you will indeed be punished for endangering the lives of thousands of people.”

“Sadly, criminals do not fear the repercussions of their actions, and have even publicly admitted it,” he said. “Many of you are aware of the Kia boys and their public statements. They’re proud of their behavior. They are laughing literally at our police, and they are making a mockery of our criminal justice system and the rule of law.”

He added “this is not a silver bullet, and I am all for a multi-prong approach to addressing this serious problem, but this is a much-needed first step.”