

Assembly GOP passes constitutional amendment giving Legislature more oversight on spending of federal funds

Posted on Tuesday, Sep 12, 2023

Assembly Republicans 63-35 today approved a constitutional amendment that would require the Legislature to sign off on allocating federal money.

This is the second consecutive legislative session the Assembly has approved a measure to give itself more say over how federal dollars are spent. The GOP-controlled Senate still needs to sign off on the measure this session before it could go to a referendum.

Dems blasted the effort as a move that could delay future responses to emergencies.

Rep. Daniel Riemer, D-Milwaukee, argued the bill language is still unclear, noting he and his fellow Dems only ended up with more questions than answers after the measure's public committee hearing. He added interpretation will likely be up to the courts and "AJR 6 is dangerously ambiguous."

>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)

Rep. Shae Sortwell, R-Two Rivers, argued the measure is a way for Republicans to right their own past wrongs, pointing out Republicans delegated the authority to expend federal dollars to the governor's office in the 1930s.

"They were wrong, they gave up their responsibility, they gave up their authority," he said. "I believe they violated their oath of office to give away a power that has been with the legislative branch of government for at least 1,000 years, going back

at least to the Magna Carta.”

Republicans also argued the Legislature proved it can be nimble because during the COVID-19 pandemic when the Assembly convened to give Evers more authority. They also argued the legislators are the ones who represent constituencies so they can better represent voters than one executive leader.

The measure includes a provision allowing the UW System to continue accepting federal funds and spending the money without legislative approval. AJR 84 also includes a provision that blocks the Legislature from delegating its appropriation authority.