

# Assembly sends \$98.7 billion GOP budget to Evers

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The Assembly late Thursday evening approved 63-34 along party lines a \$98.7 billion two-year budget that would pump more money into K-12 education, raises for state employees and transportation projects.

Speaker Robin Vos, R-Rochester, touted the budget as an historic investment and touted the GOP's \$3.5 billion income tax cut. Speaking to the chamber before the body voted down 13 Dem amendments, Vos said the tax cuts, education investments and workforce housing proposals, among other things, will help attract and retain more workers while reducing the state's brain drain.

"And I hope that when Governor Evers gets the budget, like he has in the past, he might huff and puff and say what he's going to do," he said. "But in the end, he will look and say, 'It's good for the middle class, it's good for every Wisconsinite,' and that's why he signs it into law."

Minority Leader Greta Neubauer, D-Racine, countered the budget still doesn't do enough to make Wisconsin more attractive to young professionals. The 31-year-old argued many of her friends are choosing other states.

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"There are countless items taken from Governor Evers' budget that I can spend time talking about today, including how young people actually seek out public transit, and your opposition does nothing but stifle our opportunity to grow," she said.

Debate got heated several times throughout the process as Dems blasted Republicans for failing to fund their priorities and Majority Leader Tyler August, R-Lake Geneva, chided Dems for expansive amendments stretching hundreds of

pages.

Dem Joint Finance Committee member Rep. Evan Goyke, of Milwaukee, said Republicans drafted the income tax bracket changes in a way to give Evers room to strike the top bracket reduction. He said it's a strategy to get the gov to sign the rest of the bill while getting rhetorical wins on the floor.

"I think Republicans blinked," he said.

He said Republicans will tout tonight as a win, but next week when Evers vetoes that top tax cut, they will send a flurry of press releases blasting him for attacking their tax cuts.

August cut the mics off for several Dems after they exceeded the 2-minute debate limit. Total debate was limited to eight hours.

The Dem amendments that were rejected would have:

- \*Used state money to fund Child Care Counts, which subsidizes child care centers in the state;

- \*Expanded Medicaid and provided postpartum coverage up to a year after childbirth;

- \*Repealed the state's 1849 abortion ban;

- \*Removed a provision cutting the UW System budget by \$32 million, 142 positions and 188.8 full-time equivalent positions; and

- \*Created a paid family leave program for private sector workers.

Every amendment failed along party lines, except a measure that would increase funding for the Department of Justice's Office of School Safety. Dem AG Josh Kaul earlier this week said the Republican budget would turn existing OSS programs into "just a shell of what we have currently."

The office has a 24/7 hotline open to report potential threats to school safety and works on threat assessments for schools.

Milwaukee Democratic Socialist Reps. Darrin Madison and Ryan Clancy joined

Republicans in shooting down the OSS funding.

Clancy told WisPolitics lawmakers missed the opportunity in the budget to further increase funding for schools, which he says would improve school safety.

“We don’t make our schools safer places to be and learn by relying on the presence of law enforcement,” he said.

Rep. Deb Andraca, D-Whitefish Bay, said even though Vos doesn’t like it when she speaks in favor of law enforcement, she’s going to do it anyway.

“And I want you all to go home and be able to look your kids in the eye and say we did absolutely everything that we possibly could to keep you safe at school,” she said. “Because anything other than a yes vote means that hotline is shut down; it means the threat assessment program has shut down.”

Vos fired back Dems could just ask Kaul to divert DOJ’s diversity, equity and inclusion employees toward the OSS. He also argued a hotline already exists.

“You know what the best hotline is when there’s an incident at school? 911,” he said. “That’s already there, fully staffed 24 hours a day. So if somebody sees something or worries about it, they can call 911 to ensure that kids are safe, and not have to go through the bureaucracy of the DOJ.”

Rep. Christine Sinicki, D-Milwaukee, blasted Republicans for opposing Medicaid expansion. Wisconsin is one of 10 states that have not expanded Medicaid programs. The change would have covered an estimated 89,700 additional people and generated \$1.6 billion in savings.

“You know, Mr.Chair, if this was money coming from the federal government to line the pockets of your rich friends, you’d be lined up for it,” she said. “But because this is money that is going to help support hardworking Wisconsinites, people who may be struggling, who might need a hand up, you’re not going to do it.”

Vos argued against Medicaid expansion, slamming the amendment as “more one-size-fits-all, a dictate from the government to say, ‘We’re going to control your health care, we’re going to trap you in poverty, we’re not going to give you the portability to be able to move from job to job.’”