

# Dems, locals balk at price tag for Milwaukee in Brewers bill

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Asking taxpayers to help cover the cost of a professional sports stadium for the second time in eight years, GOP lawmakers again argued it would be cheaper to put public money into the Milwaukee Brewers ballpark than to lose the team.

But Dem lawmakers said the \$202.5 million Milwaukee County and the city would have to cover of the more than \$700 million deal was too high a price on local taxpayers. The mayor also criticized the plan for not giving city or county officials a spot on the new board that would oversee the stadium as part of a deal that would keep the team in Milwaukee through at least 2050.

Rep. Rob Brooks, a key architect of the plan, told WisPolitics he expects the price tag for the state and local governments to change as final details are hammered out. He expects the \$411 million from the state over the next 27 years now envisioned in the bill to drop. Meanwhile, the contribution from the city and county — a \$7.5 million a year through 2050 — will depend on how they approach coming up with their share.

The Saukville Republican said they could front load the money to drop the overall commitment. Meanwhile, if they seek to delay starting to pay part of the cost beyond 2024, that price tag could go higher. Brooks said GOP lawmakers offered local officials the opportunity to propose a plan to put in a combined \$5 million annually, but they didn't produce one ahead of the bill being released Monday.

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"We're trying to give the locals as much flexibility as they can," Brooks said.

Senate Minority Leader Melissa Agard, D-Madison, and Assembly Minority Leader Greta Neubauer, D-Racine, both said they are willing to negotiate a bipartisan

agreement. But they said the bill “falls short.”

Meanwhile, state Sen. La Tonya Johnson, D-Milwaukee, said the proposal is bad for the city and county. Even with an uptick in shared revenue coming their way starting next year, both are facing financial difficulties that make coming up with \$7.5 million a year not feasible, she said.

“Where is this money coming from?” she asked.

The bill released Monday follows the general outline that WisPolitics reported earlier this summer as talks kicked off, though the numbers included in the legislation have changed.

One version of the earlier package called for the state to commit \$463 million over the life of the deal, while the county and city would account for \$135 million and the team an additional \$100 million beyond its current expenses.

The new bill calls for \$411 million from the state, \$202.5 million from the local governments and \$100 million from the team in exchange for extending the team’s lease to 2050. It’s now scheduled to expire at the end of 2030.

Gov. Tony Evers in his budget proposed using \$290 million from the state’s surplus for a grant to the district overseeing the stadium during fiscal year 2023-24 to be invested. The one-time grant and earnings off the money would then cover improvements as the team signed an extension to remain in Milwaukee for an additional 13 years through 2043.

An Evers spokesperson said the gov “looks forward to reviewing Republicans’ proposal and continuing conversations on a plan that provides additional flexibility and minimizes harm for local partners while ensuring we keep this important economic driver and thousands of jobs in our state.”

See more in Monday’s [PM Update](#).