

# Evers backs revised Brewers bill, says he's lobbying Dems to support it

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Gov. Tony Evers says he believes the \$646 million Brewers stadium maintenance bill that cleared the Assembly on a bipartisan vote is a good deal for taxpayers as well as Milwaukee, and he's lobbying Senate Dems to back the bill.

Evers told WisconsinEye he's "encouraging people that I can influence on the Senate side" to support the bill. Evers said he backs the current version and would likely support proposed changes in the Senate such as adding a ticket tax to non-Brewers events and requiring an audit of the stadium district's finances.

"My goal is to sign that bill, period," Evers told WisEye on Friday. The video was posted Monday morning.

The amended bill includes \$411 million from the state over 27 years. Meanwhile, Milwaukee County and the city would put in \$135 million. The team has agreed to contribute \$100 million in addition to its rent payments and to sign a lease through 2050. It's now slated to expire in 2030.

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So far, no Senate Dem has publicly announced support for the bill. Among Dem Senate members from Milwaukee, sources tell WisPolitics Sen. LaTonya Johnson is believed to be the one most likely to support the bill if it comes up for a vote in the GOP-run Senate. Republicans control the chamber 22-11, and Majority Leader Devin LeMahieu, R-Oostburg has said he lacks the GOP votes needed to pass the bill, but was working to line up more support from his caucus.

Two other Milwaukee Dem senators have been critical of the bill. Sen. Chris Larson

has been knocked it on social media, and Sen. Tim Carpenter registered against the legislation while it was up for a public hearing last week. Carpenter told WisPolitics afterward he wants to see several changes before he would back the legislation; that includes the Brewers or the business community covering more of the cost.

Sen. Lena Taylor, D-Milwaukee, told WisPolitics Monday she opposes the bill that emerged from the Assembly. Taylor said she would like to see the team pick up more of the costs rather than the financial burden being placed on “the backs of Milwaukee residents and a community that is already struggling.”

Taylor said she’d support a ticket tax on all events at American Family Field, likening it to a user fee. Rep. Rob Brooks, R-Saukville and a co-author of the bill, said last week he’s open to a ticket tax on non-Brewers events. But applying one to baseball games is a nonstarter with the Brewers.

Taylor said she would like to support the bill in the end if enough changes are made.

“I’m not a permanent no, but it cannot be where we are,” Taylor said. “I’m open to hearing what’s next.”

Also during the interview, Evers said he’s concerned a GOP bill seeking to combat PFAS contamination would actually hamstring the DNR’s ability to do so.

The state budget set aside \$125 million to fight PFAS through a bill led by Green Bay Republican Sens. Rob Cowles and Eric Wimberger. The measure includes a municipal grant program to help communities pay for PFAS-related testing, disposal and infrastructure upgrades, among other initiatives.

PFAS are a series of chemicals found in industrial and everyday products, including firefighting foam and non-stick cookware. The “forever chemicals” do not break down easily in the environment and are linked to several diseases and cancers in humans.

Evers said he backs the part of the bill to help municipalities fight PFAS.

“But I’m concerned, you have the Department of Natural Resources that has the ability to – and frankly, I think somewhat limited ability — to deal with this issue,” Evers said. “And to hamstring them on this issue, which is probably the most important issue that they need to be working on, that doesn’t make any sense to

me.”

Evers also argued the bill wouldn't hold those responsible for pollution accountable, adding he doesn't like that the proposal wouldn't set standards for PFAS in groundwater.

Still, Evers said it's important to get the bill across the finish line, even if it's flawed.

“But I have to weigh how flawed it is on the accountability piece and on what the DNR is no longer able to do,” Evers said.

See the WisEye interview with Evers:

<https://wiseye.org/2023/10/30/newsmakers-check-in-with-governor-tony-evers/>