

Evers' office slams GOP committee vote against four NRB picks

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Gov. Tony Evers' office is knocking a Senate committee's vote against confirming four of his nominations to the Natural Resources Board.

The only appointment the Senate Financial Institutions and Sporting Heritage Committee voted to advance via paper ballot Thursday was former dairy farmer Paul Buhr. He was approved unanimously.

The committee voted along party lines against the appointments of Sandra Naas, Jim VandenBrook, Sharon Adams and Dylan Jennings with all GOP committee members opposed.

If the full Senate follows the recommendation, it would remove four of the gov's seven picks on the board. The chamber can still take up a nomination that receives a negative vote in committee, and a spokesperson for Majority Leader Devin LeMahieu, R-Oostburg, said the caucus will discuss the appointments before deciding whether to put them before the full body.

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"It's outrageous that four dedicated and qualified public citizens who are volunteering their time, energy, and expertise to serve our state continue to be subjected to the political ire of Wisconsin Republicans whose own resumes wouldn't pass muster for filling these very roles," said Evers spokesperson Britt Cudaback.

The vote comes after the Senate last week held its first hearing on Naas' appointment since declining to act on it when she was first appointed in spring 2021.

Then-Board Chair Fred Prehn, an appointee of former GOP Gov. Scott Walker,

refused to step down when his term expired in May that year. The Senate's refusal to take up Naas' appointment allowed Prehn to continue serving on the board, preserving the board's then-4-3 majority of Walker appointees.

Prehn's move was upheld by the state Supreme Court last June. But he left the body after Evers won reelection, and all seven members of the board are now Evers appointees. That cleared the way for Naas to join the board in December last year.

During her confirmation hearing last week, Naas told the committee she would support an environmental rule that exceeded Environmental Protection Agency standards, particularly related to water. VandenBrook told the committee he would potentially support such a rule as well if the standards are recommended by the Department of Health Services.

Naas also during the hearing had told committee members she would support a rule recommended by DNR even if the compliance costs exceeded the limit in state law of \$10,000 over two years.