

# LeMahieu says GOP abortion bill won't be considered on Senate floor

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Majority Leader Devin LeMahieu says a GOP bill to add exceptions to Wisconsin's 1849 abortion ban will not be considered on the Senate floor, adding "discussion on this specific proposal is unnecessary."

In his statement, the Oostburg Republican knocked Dem Gov. Tony Evers for making a "snap decision" to suggest he would veto the bill. He said it is "not a topic to use as a political football."

The bill had hit other roadblocks as it was unveiled, with anti-abortion groups raising concerns and the Republican co-authors acknowledging they lacked the needed GOP votes to pass it in both houses.

Meanwhile, Dems were quick to dismiss the bill as a political stunt after Republicans struggled with the issue in the November election. It is also poised to be a significant theme in the spring race for the state Supreme Court and a vacant suburban Milwaukee Senate seat once held by Republican Alberta Darling; both elections are April 4.

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Assembly Minority Leader Greta Neubauer, D-Racine, knocked the bill as a "disingenuous attempt to cover up their out of touch position in advance of the April 4th election."

Meanwhile, Senate Minority Leader Melissa Agard, D-Madison, said in an interview the bill seemed more about political messaging than about a true attempt to overhaul the 174-year-old law.

"It's just checking a box before an election. They clearly know that it's not going

anywhere,” Agard said.

The bill also drew concerns from anti-abortion groups.

Gracie Skogman, the legislative/PAC director for Wisconsin Right to Life, wrote in an email that the groups agreed the 1849 ban may need to be updated. Still, it has concerns with the provisions to add exceptions for rape and incest during the first trimester.

Meanwhile, Matt Sande, the legislative director of Pro-Life Wisconsin, called it “incredibly disheartening that legislative Republicans are working to restore abortion to Wisconsin.”

During a news conference Wednesday, Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, R-Rochester, said it was unlikely the bill would make it to the floor in his house ahead of the April 4 election.

Republicans released the bill alongside another that would allow pharmacists to dispense birth control pills and patches, saying it was part of an overall effort to make abortion rare.

The abortion bill would add to the 1849 law new exceptions for rape or incest during the first trimester of a pregnancy. Victims wouldn't have to make a report to the authorities to qualify for the exception.

The bill also would clarify the existing exception for the life of the mother. It proposes allowing abortions when there is “a serious risk of death of the pregnant woman or of substantial and irreversible physical impairment of a major bodily function of the woman.”

The bill also would allow an abortion in which the fetus has no chance of survival outside the uterus and for an ectopic or a molar pregnancy.

Vos said he hoped to get 50 members of his caucus to support the bill. Meanwhile, co-author Sen. Mary Felzkowski, R-Irma, said backers were still short of 17 GOP votes in her chamber.

Republicans would need Dem support to pass the bill – an unlikely prospect.

“Part of this is also hoping that Democrats are willing to work with us on this update

and not thinking that somehow they're going to allow the other branch of government to become a super Legislature," Vos said.

The speaker was referencing a lawsuit Dem AG Josh Kaul filed in Dane County Circuit Court seeking to overturn the law. The suit could eventually end up before the state Supreme Court, which now has a 4-3 conservative majority but could flip next month if liberal Janet Protasiewicz defeats former Justice Daniel Kelly.

Evers, who backed Kaul filing the suit, made clear he won't sign anything that "leaves women with fewer rights and freedoms" than they had before the U.S. Supreme Court last summer overturned the 1973 decision guaranteeing the right to an abortion.

In a November 2022 poll, the Marquette University Law School found 84 percent of registered voters supported allowing women to obtain an abortion if they become pregnant due to rape or incest. That question didn't include a limit on when the abortion could be obtained during the pregnancy.

The Marquette poll in August 2022 also found 30 percent of registered voters believed abortion should be legal in all cases and 35 percent in most cases. Twenty-five percent said it should be illegal in most cases, while 5 percent said it should be illegal in all cases.

Read the bill:

<https://www.wispolitics.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/230315Abortion.pdf>