

Rep. Conley: Bill opposed by Wisconsin technical colleges, Democrats, pulled from assembly floor calendar

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MADISON – Today, the Wisconsin State Assembly pulled Assembly Bill 2 from the floor after pushback from Wisconsin technical colleges and local businesses. Republicans passed Assembly Bill 2 through the Assembly Committee on Ways and Means last week in a contentious executive session. Democratic members of the committee Rep. Sue Conley (D-Janesville), Rep. Samba Baldeh (D-Madison), Rep. Tod Ohnstad (D-Kenosha), and Rep. Daniel Riemer (D-Milwaukee) supported technical colleges and local businesses in opposing the amendment. The amendment would drastically change the way Wisconsin technical colleges are funded, stripping local control without public input.

Assembly Bill 2 originally concerned Wisconsin's personal property tax law. However, Republicans introduced a substitute amendment drastically altering the bill one hour before the Ways and Means committee was set to vote on the bill. The substitute amendment stripped Wisconsin technical colleges of their taxing authority, requiring them to rely on state general purpose revenue for funding. During the committee meeting, some Republicans expressed concerns regarding the amendment. GOP members then recessed for partisan caucus with their leadership, and upon returning, passed the substitute amendment on a party-line vote.

“There was no opportunity for public input, or time for legislators to speak with technical colleges and businesses in their districts who this amendment would affect. The GOP once again tried to push through bad policy to fix a problem they

created. Technical colleges rely on their taxing authority to make adjustments for their students, operating costs, and local community needs. Passing legislation without public testimony is just bad governing. I am glad to see that Republican leadership realized their mistake and pulled Assembly Bill 2 from the floor,” Rep. Sue Conley stated.

“I’m pleased Republican leadership pulled the amendment to Assembly Bill 2 from the floor. This would have undermined the great work of our technical colleges here in Wisconsin. Taking away taxing authority of our vocational schools which they had for over 50 years, without as much as a public hearing, would have seriously jeopardized the state’s economy.” Rep. Tod Ohnstad stated.

“Despite the fact that the people affected were denied a public hearing, they did speak out. Loudly enough to stop this bad bill in its tracks. If the GOP leaders had played by the rules that encourages public input, this bill would have been voted down in our committee,” Rep. Samba Baldeh commented.

“Our technical colleges are vitally important to the success of our state, as they help people in our communities gain the skills they need to get good jobs. Assembly Bill 2 would have harmed technical colleges and the students they serve. I’m glad AB 2 did not go through today,” Rep. Riemer said.