

‘UpFront’: Negotiations continue on Brewers stadium maintenance deal as Senate prepares for Tuesday vote

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Senate Minority Leader Melissa Agard, D-Madison, said there weren’t enough votes yet to pass the Brewers funding bill as negotiations intensified this weekend ahead of a vote Tuesday in the state Senate.

“There are not the votes right this moment to pass the bill,” Agard said Friday in a taping for WISN’s “UpFront,” which is produced in partnership with WisPolitics. “Certainly there was heavy lifting in the Assembly, great bipartisan support. Clearly, Gov. Evers is working really hard to get this done, and myself and many of my colleagues are on the record as wanting to get to yes, but we believe we can improve upon the bill.”

The amended bill in the Senate reduces the state’s contribution and increases the team’s payment compared to the Assembly version, and will need a bipartisan vote to pass.

“It’s so fluid right now,” Agard said. “There are a lot of pressure points, so if you move this a little bit you might gain or lose votes, so we’re really trying to be thoughtful to put the best deal forward.”

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Agard said she’s remaining in contact with not only her Dem caucus but Gov. Tony Evers, Senate Majority Leader Devin LeMahieu, R-Oostburg, and the many stakeholders including business and union groups.

One major sticking point, she said, remains the fact Milwaukee and Milwaukee County aren’t given appointees to the new stadium district board. The city and

county together will contribute \$135 million over the course of the \$692.9 million deal.

“That is vitally important because we know if you’re not at the table you’re on the table,” Agard said. “So everything that we can do to decrease the state’s contribution, make sure all the voices are being heard through the process and really honoring those local governments is really important.”

Meanwhile, GOP state Sen. Dan Feyen, the bill’s co-author, told “UpFront” more GOP changes could be introduced on the floor Tuesday. That could include a larger contribution from the Brewers.

“That’s a conversation we’re having with the Brewers,” said Feyen, R-Fond du Lac. “It’s great that the Brewers are willing to stay here. They could have just said, ‘2030, we’re going to be done.’”

Feyen said a new GOP amendment could also address the makeup of the stadium district board.

“Right now we’re working with the governor, and he’s been saying that I think this is a good way to go about it, so we’re waiting to hear back on that,” Feyen said. “The amendment doesn’t address that specifically, but the governor is talking with the Democratic colleagues and trying to get them on board with this as well.”

Feyen wouldn’t yet give an exact vote count in the 33-member Senate where Republicans hold a 22-11 majority.

“I think we are very close,” he said. “I was working the phones on the way down here today. We’re still working on it. We’re still trying to get to a hard number. We’re going to get there, though.”

Feyen added he’s remained in contact with Assembly leaders to ensure whatever may pass the Senate can again pass the Assembly before heading to the governor.

Also, Marquette Law School Poll Director Charles Franklin says his latest survey shows Wisconsin voters open to the possibility of a third-party candidate, specifically the results for Robert Kennedy Jr.’s run as an independent.

“About 5% say they would vote for Kennedy if he were on the ballot as opposed to the two major party candidates, but another 23% say they would probably vote for

him," Franklin said.

"Kennedy is better liked among Republicans than Democrats, and he draws more of that potential vote from Republican voters, Trump voters, than he does from Biden voters."

In hypothetical matchups in last week's Marquette Law School, Biden had a 2-point edge in a Biden-Trump rematch, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis had a 2-point edge on Biden, and former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley led the president by 9 points.

"What Haley does in that high percentage for her, it shows voters are really well set in their views of Donald Trump, whether positive or negative and likewise with Joe Biden," Franklin said. "Of course if she were to become the nominee people would learn a lot about her, and we'd go to our partisan corners and we'd almost surely come back to a close race."

A key indicator to watch, Franklin said ahead of the 2024 election, is Biden's job approval in Wisconsin, which is currently at 42%.

"Biden's number has fluctuated in the low to mid 40s in our poll for the last couple of years," he said. "That is a disadvantage to any president running for reelection. The thing to watch over the coming year is whether those numbers creep up over the campaign year. When we've seen successful reelection bids in the past, usually in the last 9 months to 12 months of the campaign, we see a little bit of improvement of approval numbers for the incumbent president."

The show also featured a segment on advocates with spinal cord injuries who met with lawmakers at the Capitol this past week in their efforts to move forward bipartisan legislation that would fund new research in Wisconsin.

"By our calculations and from our meetings, we know once it gets to the floor it will pass," said Matthew Rodreick, executive director of the group United 2 Fight Paralysis.

The bill authored by Rep. Paul Tittl, R-Manitowoc, would award new grants to fund spinal cord research in Wisconsin and also create a new advisory council. It passed an Assembly committee in October and is now before the Joint Finance Committee.

"In all of our meetings, we have a long spreadsheet of everybody who has been a firm yes," Rodreick said. "We have almost one-third of the entire Legislature as

cosponsors, so we're pretty confident in the yes vote."

"Have we had good meetings? Yes. Encouraging? Yes. But at the same time we know how this building works, and we know the longer you sit and wait, the more the asks start rising," he said.

See more from the show:

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