

# Assembly sends campus free speech bill to Evers

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Assembly Republicans today sent a campus free speech bill to the governor.

SB 498, which passed 53 to 45 along party lines, would create a host of new rules surrounding free expression on Universities of Wisconsin campuses, including measures that would freeze a college's tuition for two years if campuses repeatedly violate new "due process" rights for students or administrators accused of disciplinary and conduct violations.

Rep. Angela Stroud, D-Ashland, said the bill was a misguided effort by Republicans fixated on perceived hostility toward conservative students, which she said a 2023 review of student views on freedom of speech showed was "not systemic or university-wide."

"Passing a bill that offers a punitive solution to a cultural problem will only force campuses to hire more lawyers. It won't touch the problem," Stroud said.

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Instead, she called on legislators to model respectful political debate.

Rep. Amanda Nedweski, R-Pleasant Prairie, responded by invoking the fatal shooting of conservative activist Charlie Kirk and criticizing the UW system's "dismal" efforts to encourage a culture of free expression.

"Our institutions have become more focused on one-sided political instruction and less on workforce preparation," Nedweski said. "This bill is a necessary step forward in not only repairing the culture of speech and expression in our campuses, but also and more importantly, Mr. Speaker, a step in restoring trust between our institutions and the public."

The bill previously cleared the Senate 17-16, and it now heads to Dem Gov. Tony Evers.