

Gov. Evers: Takes action on six bipartisan bills

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MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers today took action on six bills that received bipartisan support, including legislation to strengthen laws to protect Wisconsin's kids and support crime victims and survivors.

Today, the governor signed six bills, including:

[Assembly Bill 677](#), now 2025 Wisconsin Act 88:

- Creates a crime of grooming a child for sexual activity and provides graduated penalties;
- Adds the new crime to various cross-references, including to the list of offenses whose statute of limitations end when the victim reaches the age of 45;
- Adds the crime of grooming to the definition of "abuse" for the purposes of the Children's Code;
- Provides that consent is not an issue or a defense for the purposes of the crime of grooming; and
- Modifies the current law offense of sexual misconduct by a school staff person or volunteer by clarifying that victims under that offense include any pupil enrolled in a school in Wisconsin, rather than limiting it to a particular school.

[Senate Bill 673](#), now 2025 Wisconsin Act 89:

- Requires each school district, private school, and independent charter school in the state to adopt a policy on appropriate communication among employees and volunteers, when acting in their official capacity, and students by Sept. 1, 2026;
- Requires the policy to include a range of consequences up to termination for

policy violations;

- Requires the policy to apply to communications both during and outside of school hours, with standards for appropriate content and methods of communication;
- Requires the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to develop and make available free training about identifying, preventing, and reporting grooming, as well as professional boundary violations; and
- Requires each board or governing body to provide annual training to employees on identifying, preventing, and reporting grooming and professional boundary violations using either training developed by DPI or a different training that complies with requirements starting in the 2026-27 school year.

“Keeping our kids safe, especially while they’re in our schools, must be a top priority for us, whether it’s addressing grooming, gun violence, bullying, or other harmful behavior. We have an important obligation to make sure our kids can feel secure, supported, and cared for by educators and staff in our schools—adults they should be able to trust and depend on—while also providing more clarity about what interactions with students are inappropriate and unacceptable and enhancing punishments for adults who violate that sacred trust,” said Gov. Evers. “Defining grooming is a critical step to give law enforcement and local school districts the tools they need to hold bad actors accountable for hurting our kids, and I’m glad the Legislature took this seriously this session and passed bipartisan legislation to get this done.”

[Senate Bill 413](#), now 2025 Wisconsin Act 90:

- Expands the current immunity for underage drinking offenses and creates immunity for aiders and victims of certain controlled substance violations by specifically adding any crime against a child involving sexual contact or sexually explicit conduct to the definition of crime for the purposes of immunity and create immunity from prosecution for a misdemeanor violation of possessing a controlled substance or controlled substance analog, possessing drug paraphernalia, and possessing a masking agent if the person is a victim of sexual assault or a person seeking aid for the victim;
- Extends the statute of limitations for prosecuting second-degree sexual assault;
- Extends the period that the state crime laboratories must store sexual assault kits; and

- Allows a tenant to terminate a residential lease based on a person engaging, attempting, or threatening a crime that would constitute sexual assault, among other provisions.

“Victims and survivors of sexual assault have already endured the unimaginable, and ensuring they have the resources, tools, and time they need to report crimes and seek justice is the bare minimum we should be doing,” said Gov. Evers. “It’s imperative that our state laws ensure bad actors are held accountable for their actions, while reducing barriers survivors often face when seeking justice and ensuring those who help victims and survivors of crime are not unfairly penalized.”

[Senate Bill 439](#), now 2025 Wisconsin Act 91:

- Creates ongoing annual levy adjustment grants for the village of Oregon, the town of Oregon, and the town of Rutland to offset levy limit reductions related to issues with the joint fire and emergency medical services levy limit exception.

[Senate Bill 459](#), now 2025 Wisconsin Act 92:

- Modifies the evidentiary rule on expert witness testimony by aligning it more closely with its current counterpart in the Federal Rules of Evidence; and
- Clarifies that the proponent of an expert witness’ testimony must demonstrate to the court that it is more likely than not that the testimony is based upon sufficient facts or data, that it is the product of reliable principles, and that the opinion reflects a reliable application of the principles and methods to the facts of the case.

[Senate Bill 466](#), now 2025 Wisconsin Act 93:

- Expands the Missing Child Alert program by increasing the eligible ages for which an alert can be issued to 10- and 11-year-olds.

In 2024, Gov. Evers [signed](#) 2023 Act 272, also known as the “Prince Act,” which aimed to address gaps in the Wisconsin AMBER Alert System by expanding criteria for issuing alerts for missing children. At the time, the expansion was limited to those under 10 years old due to funding concerns. To address this barrier, the

2025-27 Biennial Budget signed by Gov. Evers provided more than \$300,000 and two positions annually to support the Missing Child Alert system and accommodate the increased number of alerts due to the expansion of alerts for missing adults to include missing children as specified under Act 272. With this expansion, the bill will help more missing children be safely located by quickly alerting communities.

“When a child goes missing, it is critically important to share that information as quickly as possible and get all-hands-on-deck to get them home safe and sound,” said Gov. Evers. “This expansion addresses an existing gap in the system and ensures even more kids receive the emergency response they and their families deserve.”

An online version of this release is available [here](#).