

# Rep. Piwowarczyk: Assembly passes Rep. Jim Piwowarczyk's bipartisan free speech bill

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Madison, WI — State Representative Jim Piwowarczyk's bipartisan Free Speech bill passed the Assembly:

Assembly Bill 701 strengthens protections for free speech and civic participation. The legislation creates a clear and efficient process for courts to promptly dismiss lawsuits that target constitutionally protected speech on matters of public concern.

The bill ensures a timely court hearing, pauses expensive discovery while the motion is under consideration, and allows those who prevail to recover their attorney fees. Together, these provisions help protect people from being burdened by drawn-out, costly lawsuits that can discourage them from speaking out.

"We have seen why this matters," Rep. Piwowarczyk said. "In a recent Wisconsin case, a parent who criticized her school district on social media was sued for defamation. Although she ultimately prevailed, she endured significant time and expense defending clearly protected speech. Assembly Bill 701 will help prevent situations like that by allowing courts to promptly dismiss meritless claims designed to intimidate or deter public participation."

"I'm proud the Assembly came together in a bipartisan way to pass Assembly Bill 701," Rep. Piwowarczyk added. "Free speech is not a partisan issue — it's a constitutional right. This bill protects Wisconsinites from being dragged into costly, drawn-out lawsuits simply for speaking out on matters of public concern, while still preserving access to the courts for legitimate claims."

In addition, the Assembly also passed Assembly Bill 717, which strengthens penalties for trafficking carfentanil. By establishing a carfentanil-specific trafficking offense with graduated felony penalties based on the quantity involved. Even small amounts would carry enhanced penalties, with higher felony levels applying as the quantity increases. The bill also clarifies that, consistent with existing law for other highly dangerous substances, the total weight of any mixture containing carfentanil is used when determining penalties. This approach recognizes the drug's extreme potency and the serious harm it can cause, even in very small doses.

Both bills now head to the State Senate for consideration.