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**Evers performs some major edits on GOP budget plan**

By WisPolitics.com

Despite some narrowing over the years, Wisconsin's governor still has very broad partial veto power.

And Democratic Gov. Tony Evers, in his third budget go-round, emphasized that point in signing the latest $98.7 billion, two-year spending plan.

His 51 partial vetoes revised major sections of the budget bill. And because the Republican Legislature does not have enough votes in both houses to overturn the vetoes, they're likely to become law.

And he didn't have to veto the entire bill, as some Democrats have argued he should do. These progressive say Evers, just off his 2022 reelection and unlikely to run again, should force a confrontation with Republicans ahead of legislative maps being redrawn and ahead of the 2024 elections. They reason a full-throated budget debate on Democratic principles could help Democrats win at least one of the houses if as expected a liberal state Supreme Court takes up the case and delivers a friendlier map.

But while saying the GOP budget was “incomplete,” Evers rejected calls from some to veto the entire two-year plan. He cited the various priorities he achieved in the budget, including increases in funding
for education and local governments.

“Vetoing this entire budget would mean abandoning priorities and ideas I’ve spent four years advocating for,” he said ahead of the signing in the state Capitol.

Instead Evers used his partial veto power to "fix" the parts of the GOP budget plan he didn't like:

-- Cut the GOP's $3.5 billion tax cut plan to just $175 million and funneled the tax relief to lower-income Wisconsinites. The money that would’ve gone to the GOP tax cuts will instead remain in the general fund. That sets up the state to have a surplus of more than $3 billion at its starting point for the 2025-27 budget in two years.

-- Vetoed a provision that would’ve directed the Department of Revenue to update withholding tables this fall so workers would start seeing the impact of the tax cuts in their regular paychecks starting in
January. Evers noted the Revenue secretary has the power to make the adjustments without legislative approval and will “assess whether and when these updates should be made.”  He vetoed a similar legislative directive in the 2021-23 budget and then directed the agency to update withholding tables on its own.

-- Extended through 2425 an annual increase in the per-pupil spending limit of $325 a year. The budget included increases of $325 in each year of this biennium as part of a deal GOP lawmakers reached with Evers on state aid to local governments, as well as increasing the size of state-funded vouchers for private schools. His action, though, seeks to extend that annual increase by four centuries. Future legislatures, though, can change that number. Republicans claimed the move would lead to higher property taxes.

-- Nixed Republican provisions to cut diversity, equity and inclusion positions at the UW System.

Republicans also sought in the budget to target 188 positions at the UW System related to diversity, equity and inclusion. Assembly Speaker Robin Vos has been a leading proponent in targeting such efforts, calling them divisive. Evers' veto wipes out that position reduction.

At one point, Evers had threatened to veto the entire budget if Republicans went forward with a $32 million cut to university funding. They still reduced state aid to the system by $32 million, but set
aside the money in the Joint Finance Committee’s supplemental appropriation. The system can seek to have the money released after submitting a plan to the budget committee that shows how it would spend the money to bolster Wisconsin’s workforce.

“I also want to be clear, Republicans’ decision to prolong their decade-long war on higher education by failing to provide meaningful investments in our University of Wisconsin System and our tech colleges is short-sighted, misguided and wrong for the workforce, wrong for our economy and wrong for our state,” Evers said.

Vos, R-Rochester, ripped the decision.

“Contrary to Governor Evers’ statements, Republicans are not waging a war AGAINST higher education,” Vos said in a statement. “We are waging a war FOR higher education by signaling that well-balanced instruction and merit-based advancement should be the foundation of earning a degree.”

So while the revised budget is on its way to becoming law, the debate continues.

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