

Floor Session Media Coverage, June 28, 2023

Notes: WI state budget, UW funding cuts, income tax cuts, abortion

Media Coverage:

Wisconsin State Journal [Income tax cuts, UW System budget reduction approved by Wisconsin Senate](#)

The Republican-controlled Senate on Wednesday approved a \$99 billion two-year budget for Wisconsin that includes a \$3.5 billion income tax cut, with the highest cuts for the wealthy, and cuts to the University of Wisconsin System's diversity programs. The Assembly was scheduled to vote on the budget Thursday before sending the document to Democratic Gov. Tony Evers for the final word on it. The Senate passed the proposal 20-13, with all Democrats along with Republican Sens. Steve Nass of Whitewater and Rob Hutton of Brookfield voting against the proposal. Ahead of the vote, Democratic Minority Leader Melissa Agard, D-Madison, criticized Republicans' budget. "Republicans have chosen to invest \$0 in broadband expansion," she said. "(We have a) \$7 billion surplus and Republicans have put \$0 into paid family leave, something that our neighboring states now offer. So I ask, what are we doing to compete with other Midwestern states who are actually investing in their people?"

Up North News [Republicans Want to Spend \\$3.5 Billion on Tax Cuts for the Very Wealthy](#) Legislators will face harsh criticism for giving \$0 to a childcare program, broadband expansion, more stable health insurance coverage, and family leave while cutting the UW budget to pay for millionaires' big break.

APNews [Republican leaders say no more money for University of Wisconsin or school safety office](#)

Republicans plan to make no substantive changes to the state budget, meaning that a cut in funding to the University of Wisconsin System that puts the entire spending plan in jeopardy of being vetoed will remain, legislative leaders said Tuesday.

WSAW [Wisconsin Senate passes state budget, bill heads to Assembly](#) On Wednesday, the Wisconsin State Senate took up and passed the 2023-25 Biennial Budget bill. "This major piece of legislation provides increased funding for all aspects of life in Wisconsin, from schools to roads, PFAS mitigation to tourism advertising, investments in housing to the largest tax cut in state history, and everything in between," Sen. Mary Felzkowski said. The budget also includes a \$4.4 billion tax cut and increases compensation rates for our corrections employees by \$344 million. "I am very proud of the legislature's state budget. Our budget is made for Wisconsin," said Sen. Howard Marklein.

Channel3000 [Wisconsin Senate approves two-year budget with lower income tax, UW cuts](#) The bill was passed along near party lines, an expected outcome with Republicans in charge of both the Legislature's budget writing committee and the full chamber. Republicans on the budget writing committee removed \$32 million from the UW System budget to eliminate diversity, equity and inclusion programs — a move which Democrats decried. "The budget being put forward today by the Republicans is filled with squandered opportunities," said Senate Minority Leader Melissa Agard, D-Madison. "I'm hopeful that Governor Evers will consider using his veto pen really thoroughly in order to make sure that we have the best opportunity possible for people in Wisconsin."

APNews [Spending plan cutting taxes, University of Wisconsin funding clears state Senate](#) A two year spending plan that cuts taxes across all income levels, with the wealthiest benefiting the most, and gives the University of Wisconsin nearly half a billion dollars less than it asked for cleared the Republican-controlled state Senate on Wednesday. Democrats said Republicans missed an opportunity to tap the

Floor Session Media Coverage, June 28, 2023

Notes: WI state budget, UW funding cuts, income tax cuts, abortion

state's projected \$7 billion budget surplus to invest in issues that they said voters care about, like funding the University of Wisconsin and child care centers, and instead prioritized cutting taxes for the wealthy.

The CAP Times [Wisconsin Senate Republicans vote to keep state's 1849 abortion ban](#) All 22 Republican members of the state Senate voted against repealing Wisconsin's 1849 abortion ban Wednesday, marking the first floor vote on tossing the 174-year-old abortion law since Roe vs. Wade was overturned and it once again took effect. Senate Democrats, all 11 of whom voted to repeal the ban, forced the vote by introducing the idea as an amendment to a Republican-authored budget bill lawmakers were slated to vote on Thursday night. Speaking before the vote on the Senate floor, Sen. Kelda Roys, D-Madison, made the case that access to abortion is critical to women's health, family lives and financial futures. "Women know how much bleaker their future will be if they can't access abortion," Roys said. "This abortion ban has to go. Women deserve better."

Wisconsin Examiner [Wisconsin Senate passes biennial budget bill with minimal changes](#) Spending plan includes \$3.5 billion in income tax cuts, an increase for local governments and cuts to UW. The Wisconsin Senate voted to pass a two-year budget plan Wednesday that drastically cuts the state's income taxes, decreases funding for the University of Wisconsin System and excludes many priorities that were originally included in Gov. Tony Evers' budget proposal including paid family and medical leave and state funding for the Child Care Counts program. Sen. Mark Spreitzer (D-Beloit) said Republicans left too many priorities unfunded in exchange for the tax cuts. He added that Democrats laid out a path for responsible tax relief, while investing in programs to support Wisconsinites, but Republicans rejected all of that. "You traded child care for a tax cut for the rich, you've continued the trend of refusing to support our UW System and not only that you cut funding. You had a \$7 billion surplus and you cut child care and higher ed," Spreitzer said.

Wisconsin Public Radio [Senate GOP passes state budget that cuts taxes, eliminates Democratic policy priorities](#) Republican budget boosts school funding by \$1 billion, but cuts scores of proposals from Democratic Gov. Tony Evers. While there are some similarities between the budget Republicans passed and the version Evers introduced in February, the two plans would not easily be mistaken for one another. Evers, who framed the debate as an once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to make investments in Wisconsin, proposed spending more than \$1 billion combined on expanding broadband, funding a pandemic-era child care subsidy and creating a new paid family leave program. Republicans deleted all three proposals, zeroing them out. Democrats described the GOP budget in markedly different terms, telling Republicans they had squandered the opportunity to fund programs voters support. "You're inflicting generational harm on our state by prioritizing these tax breaks for the wealthy," said Senate Minority Leader Melissa Agard, D-Madison.

Benzinga ['Fiscally Irresponsible' GOP Lawmakers Kill Cannabis Legalization Amendment In Wisconsin Again](#) The Wisconsin Senate voted against two amendments to the governor's budget bill that would have made marijuana legal.

Floor Session Media Coverage, June 28, 2023

Notes: WI state budget, UW funding cuts, income tax cuts, abortion

Marijuana Moment [Wisconsin GOP Senators Defeat Marijuana Legalization Amendment Led By Top Democrat](#) The Wisconsin Senate has rejected two amendments to a budget bill that would have legalized marijuana—putting lawmakers on record about the popular voter-supported policy. After Republican senators stripped cannabis provisions from the governor’s budget committee last month, Senate Minority Leader Melissa Agard (D) gave the full chamber a chance to enact the reform, with one omnibus amendment that would have restored several administrative priorities including marijuana legalization and another clean measure focused exclusively on legalizing cannabis.

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel [Senate passes state budget that leverages a historic surplus to cut taxes, boost education spending](#) Democratic lawmakers blasted their Republican colleagues for not using a \$7 billion budget surplus on more programs and services, instead largely putting the funds toward a tax cut that lowers income taxes for everyone in the state while favoring the state's wealthiest residents. Wisconsinites "deserve to have a state government that's going to fight like hell for them — for their kids, for the future, for what can be for the better of the state of Wisconsin," said Senate Minority Leader Melissa Agard, D-Madison.

Wisconsin Public Radio [In surprise move, state Senate moves to vote on top elections official after Elections Commission deadlock](#) Republican state senators used a surprise procedural maneuver Wednesday night that could lay the groundwork for an up-or-down vote on whether to fire Wisconsin's top election official ahead of the next presidential election. The unexpected vote came after senators spent the better part of the day debating and passing Wisconsin's next state budget, and a day after the Wisconsin Elections Commission deadlocked on whether to formally nominate WEC Administrator Meagan Wolfe to a second four-year term. The move caught Democrats, including Minority Leader Melissa Agard of Madison, off guard. "In my opinion, this is the worst of politics," Agard told reporters after Wednesday's session. "This was a real curveball."

WUWM [Republican senators launch late-night effort to control status of top Wisconsin election official](#) Republican Wisconsin State Senators took a late-night step Wednesday night to try to take control of whether Meagan Wolfe will stay on as Wisconsin's Elections Administrator. Her current term ends in a few days.

PBS Wisconsin (AP) [Wisconsin Republicans try to force vote on reappointment of elections administrator](#) Republicans who control the Wisconsin Senate, in a surprise move on the night of June 28, proceeded with trying to force a vote on firing the state’s nonpartisan top elections official before the 2024 presidential election. The Senate voted to move ahead at a later date with a public hearing, and ultimately a confirmation vote, on the reappointment of Meagan Wolfe for a second term overseeing elections in the presidential battleground state.