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### ARCHIVES

# SENATE PANEL OKS REINING IN GOV'S VETO

By DAVID CALLENDER *The Capital Times*

In a setback for Gov. Jim Doyle, a proposed constitutional amendment to kill the so-called "Frankenstein veto" cleared a major hurdle today.

On a bipartisan 4-0 vote, the Senate Ethics Reform and Government Operations Committee approved the proposed constitutional amendment, clearing the way for Senate approval of the measure. If the full Senate approves it, the proposal would go to voters for final approval next year.

The proposal would prohibit Wisconsin's governor - who currently can veto words and numbers in any spending bill - from vetoing words in a sentence and stitching together the remaining words to make new sentences that the Legislature never approved.

Republicans began pushing for the measure after Doyle, a Democrat, used his veto pen two years ago to rewrite the state budget bill to transfer more than \$400 million from the transportation fund to public schools. Republicans had cut the school money to force Doyle into either raising taxes or cutting state support for education.

Doyle recently used his veto pen to allow for bigger property tax increases this year. Although lawmakers approved a 2 percent cap on property tax increases this year, Doyle allowed the taxes to increase to 3.86 percent. He argued that local governments needed a bigger increase because lawmakers had delayed action on the state budget this summer.

Doyle opposed the proposed constitutional amendment, and there had been pressure on majority Democrats in the Senate to at least delay a final vote on it until Doyle was finished with the state budget this year. Even if voters approve the measure next year, the first budget it would affect would be in 2009.

"The timing was the key," said committee chairman Sen. Fred Risser, D-Madison.

Sen. Joe Leibham, R-Sheboygan, predicted that if the Senate approves the resolution, state voters will "clearly vote in support of taking away this abusive power of the veto pen."

Sen. Pat Kreitlow, D-Chippewa Falls, said the amendment will not address all of the public's concerns about the governor's veto powers. He noted, for instance, that the governor could still strike out words within a single sentence to change its meaning.

Risser concurred, adding, "It's my opinion this could still be more perfect. It doesn't really respond to the question of how much (veto) power the governor should have. But this is a step we should take."

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