



# Van H. Wanggaard

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## **EVERS BLOWS \$34 MILLION HOLE IN CORRECTIONS BUDGET**

**Partial Veto Shifts Costs of Housing Juvenile Offenders to State Without Funding**

MADISON – Governor Evers’ partial veto to lower the cost to house juvenile offenders by \$2,000 a day has created a \$34 million hole in the Department of Corrections budget. As a result of the veto, the state must now pay 75% of the costs to incarcerate juvenile felons, as opposed to counties covering the costs of their juvenile criminals. No funds were allocated for the state to cover this cost.

“Evers’ veto of this provision is unsustainable and he knows it,” said Senator Van Wanggaard (R-Racine), chairman of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety. “The statutory daily rate is not a number that we come up with out of thin air. It’s simple math - the total cost to operate our juvenile facilities divided by the average population.”

“Up until now, a county sending a juvenile to a state facility paid for those costs,” Wanggaard continued. “Governor Evers just decided unilaterally to turn it on its head and have the state pick up the vast majority of costs. It flips the entire funding of juvenile corrections without debate or discussion. It’s irresponsible.”

The daily rate in the previous budget was \$1,268. While the number of juvenile offenders is at its highest level since 2020, the Evers Administration’s refusal to utilize the expansion of Mendota Juvenile Treatment Center (MJTC) is driving costs. Governor Evers and the Legislature expanded MJTC with 165 additional employees, and 64 additional treatment beds, up from 29 beds. Despite this expansion in space and employees, Evers’ MJTC Administration is only treating 34 kids. As a result, the expansion’s new \$43 million operating cost is being shared amongst virtually the same number of juveniles.

“We literally gave Evers everything he wanted to expanded our treatment opportunities at Mendota,” Wanggaard said. “Rather than utilize the space and treatment at Mendota to help kids, he’s decided to double down on Lincoln Hills as the option, and refuse to help. It’s cynical, neglectful and unsustainable.”

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