

Finance Committee Overhauls Evers' Budget with Opening Votes

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State lawmakers on the legislature's 16-member Joint Finance Committee (JFC) opened voting on the 2023-25 state budget with the removal of more than 500 provisions that were originally included in Governor Tony Evers' budget plan introduced back in late February. The vote fell along partisan lines with the committee's 12 Republicans removing hundreds of spending proposals and non-fiscal policy items from the budget, effectively resetting spending levels to the 2021-23 baseline. The move is controversial in nature, but not an uncommon action by the committee.

The Finance committee took similar steps to remove most of Governor Evers' proposals from his 2019-21 and 2021-23 budget proposals. Included among the 545 items stripped from the latest budget proposal was a plan to create an expansive paid family and medical leave program that was of significant concern to the small business community. The Governor's 12-week paid leave proposal included funding of \$243 million and the hiring of 198 state employees to launch, administer, enforce, and pay the initial benefits in the program. Democrats on the committee introduced a motion to spend state dollars to study the economic impact of the family leave program, but their motion failed along party lines. Also on the list of items removed from the budget was the Governor's proposed small business retirement plan, along with his initiative to increase the state minimum wage to \$15 per hour. Other major proposals that were removed include legalization of recreational marijuana, expansion of Medicaid funding, tax dollars for a public health insurance option, and increased spending on public education and environmental initiatives. [See the full list of items removed from the budget.](#)

The committee continues to meet and will vote over the next several weeks on making more changes to the budget. Once they are done all of the committee's modifications to the Governor's original budget bill are incorporated into a substitute amendment, passed and sent to the full Legislature for separate floor votes in the Assembly and Senate. The Legislature generally begins deliberations and takes a final vote on the budget towards the middle of June and sends the enrolled bill to the Governor. The Governor will take up to 30 days to review the bill before issuing his vetoes and ultimately signing the bill. As with any other bill, to become law, the state budget must pass both houses of the Legislature and be signed by the Governor. Wisconsin's Governor has the power to sign the budget into law while exercising a "partial veto" by removing individual words and reducing numbers to change or eliminate appropriations or statutory language within the budget bill. The Governor may also choose to veto the budget in its entirety and send it back to the Legislature, but doing so is exceedingly rare.

In Other News...

The Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) recently announced that minors will now be able to apply for work permits online. The new online application process is part of the DWD's system modernization efforts and is designed to make it easier for minors and their parents or guardians to obtain the necessary permits to legally work in the state. To apply for a work permit online, minors will need to create an account on the DWD's website and provide certain personal information, including their name, date of birth, and Social Security number. They will also need to provide information about their school, employer, and the type of work

they will be doing. Once the application is submitted, the DWD will review it and issue a work permit if the minor is eligible. The work permit will be valid for one year. Work permits are required for workers 14 and 15 years old before they can work in any job except agriculture or domestic service work. While employers are responsible to ensure minor workers have the appropriate work permit, parents and guardians are responsible to obtain work permits for minors, according to the DWD. [Read the announcement from DWD.](#)