



Walker fields at least 15 GOP requests for budget vetoes

Items from bail bondsmen to beer distributor rules raise concerns

By [Jason Stein](#) of the Journal Sentinel

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Madison - Republican lawmakers have lined up seeking budget vetoes from Gov. Scott Walker, making at least 15 requests for him to nix a range of provisions affecting craft beer brewers, credit unions and ethics statements from public officials.

That gave a few points of bipartisan opposition to provisions in the bill, though every Republican lawmaker has voted in favor of the budget, which relies on spending cuts rather than tax increases to close a \$3 billion budget gap over two years.

Requests for vetoes are coming in as Walker, who holds the most powerful partial veto pen in the country, is expected to release his rewrites of the state budget within days.

The chief judges of the state issued a letter Wednesday asking Walker to reject a provision bringing back bail bondsmen to Wisconsin after they were prohibited for 32 years.

Democrats are also calling for vetoes of that provision and others that would allow auto title lenders in the state; cut tax credits for the working poor; and require most fired Milwaukee police officers to be paid while they appeal their dismissals.

Five Republicans and two Democratic lawmakers [sent Walker a letter](#) on Tuesday asking him to veto a provision that small beer brewers say could make it more difficult for them to expand or distribute their products. They were joined by at least four more Democrats Wednesday.

A sixth Republican, Sen. Rob Cowles (R-Allouez), also said Wednesday he wanted Walker to make that veto and others, saying some policy items in the budget had nothing to do with state finances, didn't receive adequate vetting and should be handled as separate bills.

"I would be pleased if he took out other items and forced the Legislature to go through the process," Cowles said of the governor.

Walker spokesman Cullen Werwie said the GOP governor was pleased with the overall budget but intends to make "a number of minor changes." On Wednesday afternoon, Werwie said Walker had received 15 to 20 veto requests on a number of issues from GOP lawmakers, from the craft brewer provision to another to ensure that a property tax exemption remains in place for a private student housing facility in Madison.

"Governor Walker has listened to the legislators' requests. He intends to make decisions related to vetoes and sign the overall budget before June 30," Werwie said in an email.

In budget bills, Walker's partial veto powers allow him to strike out whole provisions or crucial parts of individual sentences, such as the word "not." In 2008, voters approved a constitutional change that prohibited governors from combining parts of different sentences to create a new sentence, but that still left governors such as Walker with considerable power.

Bail bondsmen opposition

John Storck, chairman of the Committee of Chief Judges of the state, said in a letter to Walker that the chief judges were unanimously opposed to having bail bondsmen brought back through a budget bill, saying the issue should be handled more carefully as a separate bill.

"It is far too serious and complicated and raises too many significant due process and fairness issues to be adopted in this fashion. . . . Anytime you place profit-driven organizations in control of an individual's liberty, corruption must be a major concern," Storck wrote.

Rep. Gordon Hintz (D-Oshkosh) took issue with budget provisions allowing both bail bondsmen and auto title loans in the state. Hintz said such issues "have no business being in the budget."

As Walker looks at potential veto items, "these are some obvious things that jump out," said Hintz.

Supporters of bail bondsmen say they are used in the great majority of states and make the courts more efficient by ensuring people show up for their court dates.

Cowles said he would also like to see a veto of a provision making it easier for credit unions to convert to banks - an item getting attention from at least a pair of other GOP lawmakers - and another provision that would end the practice of emailing public officials' ethics statements to citizens who make a written statement, saying those matters didn't belong in a budget bill.

Rep. Robin Vos (R-Rochester) has asked Walker to also veto the ethics statement language from the budget, saying that a previous budget amendment had been intended to remove it, Vos spokeswoman Kit Beyer said.

"It's something that was left in by mistake," Beyer said.

Craft brewers' concerns

Supporters say the budget provision to ban brewers from buying wholesale beer distributors is designed to stop Anheuser-Busch from buying wholesale distributors in Wisconsin. Tim Roby, a

spokesman for the Wisconsin Beer Distributors Association, said he was "hopeful" Walker would see the bill as protecting state businesses.

"There continues to be a great deal of misinformation on the part of the craft brewers . . . it is not going to put the craft brewers out of business," Roby said of the provision.

Opponents say the fears about Anheuser-Busch are exaggerated, with craft brewers saying the legislation would hamper their growth prospects.

"This is the type of provision that should have been dealt with in a separate bill. It was complicated, and the thriving craft brew industry did not participate in drafting this provision," said Sen. Glenn Grothman (R-West Bend).

Roby said craft brewers did provide some input in the process.

Two other Republican lawmakers, Rep. Andre Jacque of Bellevue and Sen. Terry Moulton of Chippewa Falls, asked Walker to veto a provision added by the Legislature's Joint Finance Committee that would allow movie theaters to obtain liquor licenses. In a letter to the governor, they said that making alcohol available in theaters could contribute to the state's already high rate of underage drinking and binge drinking.

Senate Minority Leader Mark Miller (D-Monona) said he expected Walker to leave most of the budget bill intact, noting that the GOP governor had gotten most of the provisions that he had sought from his fellow Republicans in the Legislature.

"Most of them were put in there by the governor, so I can't imagine why he'd veto them," Miller said.

Emma Roller of the Journal Sentinel staff contributed to this article.

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