



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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Rep. Melissa Sargent and Rep. Chris Taylor Respond to Republican Hijacking of Bipartisan Sexual Assault Kit Bills

MADISON - Today, Republicans in the Assembly circulated LRB-5536/1 for co-sponsorship among members of the legislature. This bill combines two bipartisan bills regarding sexual assault kits that had previously been introduced this session by a broad, bipartisan coalition of legislators, including Reps. Sargent, Taylor, and several Republican lawmakers. Added to this newly introduced bill was divisive language, making these once bipartisan bills hyper partisan.

The original bipartisan bills, [2019 Assembly Bill 214](#) and [2019 Assembly Bill 358](#), would prevent any future backlog of sexual assault kits by standardizing the processing and storage of kits and create a tracking system for survivors to monitor the progress of their kits. In addition to their strong bipartisan support, both bills were supported by the Wisconsin Department of Justice, End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Chiefs of Police Association, the Wisconsin Nurses Association, and the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault—yet they have been stalled by Assembly leadership that is intent on preventing these important bipartisan bills from going forward with Democratic support.

Representatives Melissa Sargent (D-Madison) and Chris Taylor (D-Madison) issued the following statements in response to these disappointing, partisan actions:

“We are profoundly disheartened, though unfortunately not surprised, that Republican Assembly leadership have derailed important, bipartisan bills that make progress on how the state addresses the horrific crime of sexual assault. Legislation to more effectively, efficiently and empathetically support sexual assault victims and move their cases forward should not be partisan. Our original bills were broadly bipartisan, and we were privileged to work with our Republican colleagues on them.

“Both of these bills have already had public hearings and votes in their Senate committee, and in October, they were passed by the entire Wisconsin State Senate. Yet Republican leaders in the Assembly have refused to even schedule a public hearing on either of these bills. Instead they have chosen to make a mockery of the issue of sexual assault by putting politics over the well-being of survivors and introducing a bill that has little chance of garnering bipartisan support. It is absolutely shameful that Republican leaders have decided that no action is better than bipartisan action, especially when the stakes of the issue are so incredibly high for the thousands of sexual assault victims expecting us to advocate for them. Unfortunately, Representative Vos has brought partisan politics to a new divisive height, and seems to be derailing any bills with Democratic co-authors.

“We sincerely urge Republicans in the Assembly to reject this partisan and divisive bill and demand action on the strong bipartisan bills already introduced, already passed by the Senate, and already garnering support from survivors, medical professionals, law enforcement, and advocates. The people of this state expect us to work together to solve critical problems, and they, especially those that have experienced sexual violence, deserve better.”

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