

Hypocritical Legislative Republicans Push "Fake" Bail Crackdown Constitutional Amendment

By Mark Belling, WISN-AM

In what is becoming a disturbing pattern of Republican members of the state legislature pretending to respond to conservative concerns while actually ignoring them, the legislature is in the process of passing an amendment to the state Constitution to allow judges and court commissioners to set higher bail. The effort is phony as there is no legal way for it to take effect for years. In the meantime, bail crackdown legislation that would go into effect immediately is being killed by some of these very same key Republicans.

The constitutional amendment being passed this year would have to be approved again next year by the legislature and after that approved by voters in a referendum. Best case scenario is that it would take effect over two years from now. But there is even reason to believe that some Republicans who are voting for the amendment now will actually move to kill in next year after the 2022 election is over.

Several Republican lawmakers have been brazen obstructionists of crime crackdown legislation and there is even reason to believe their support for the constitutional amendment is "temporary."

In the meantime, bills that would stiffen bail rules now are languishing in both the state Assembly and Senate because of opposition from Speaker Robin Vos and Senate Leader Devin LeMahieu. Vos' position isn't surprising as he has become the second biggest obstacle (behind only Governor Tony Evers' veto pen) to conservative issues the last two years. LeMahieu, who has fashioned himself as a conservative, has repeatedly aligned himself with his chamber's moderates.

The Senate bill has been assigned to a committee controlled by Racine area Senator Van Wanggaard. Wanggaard is a former cop who considers himself tough on crime but has drifted leftward on several issues over the last few years. Wanggaard's aide claims his boss is trying to kill the bail bill because he thinks it is unconstitutional. But it's not up to a Senator like Wanggaard to decide if legislation violates the state Constitution. That's the role of the state Supreme Court.

The efforts by Vos, LeMahieu and Wanggaard to kill the bail legislation also let Evers off the hook and eliminate the issue as relevant in this year's election for governor. If the bill were passed, Evers would either be forced to veto it, creating a huge campaign issue, or sign it and give law and order advocates a major win.

As is becoming the norm in Madison, GOP leaders are giving Evers cover and coming up with nothing but excuses for why they can't do anything conservatives want.

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