

Gov. Evers Takes Action on Three Bills

Written by GOV Press Wisconsin

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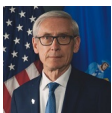


Modifications to Badger Fund of Funds, Early Literacy Program become law. Fees for nonresident archer hunting licenses and nonresident crossbow hunting licenses increased.

MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers took action on three bills Thursday, including Assembly Bill (AB) 890, Senate Bill (SB) 971, and SB 780.

Badger Fund of Funds

Gov. Evers today signed AB 890, now 2023 Wisconsin Act 98, which makes several modifications to the current Badger Fund of Funds investment program at the Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA).



“We’re continuing our efforts to support Wisconsin’s start-up ecosystem and entrepreneurs, which is critically important for our work to build an economy that can meet the needs of the 21st Century,” said Gov. Evers. “Today, I am proud to sign this bill that will bolster the ingenuity and homegrown talent we already have right here in Wisconsin. Thanks to these funds, we’re sending a message that, here in Wisconsin, if you have a great business idea and the willingness to work hard to make it happen, our administration is here to support you.”

The Badger Fund of Funds has developed important relationships with venture capital funds, emerging businesses, and other entities. The 2023-25 biennial budget signed by Gov. Evers

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appropriated \$25 million for an additional round of the program. The 2023-25 budget, as passed by the Wisconsin State Legislature, would have required the fund of funds program to repay the additional \$25 million provided to the fund of funds program and, thereafter, to pay 90 percent of gross investment returns for deposit in the general fund. Gov. Evers vetoed these requirements through partial vetoes citing concern that these provisions “may undermine efforts to attract additional co-investors in the fund of funds program,” allowing those additional funds to be reinvested. The governor’s veto message is available [here](#).

In both the governor’s 2021-23 and 2023-25 biennial budgets, the governor proposed removing the requirement that the current Badger Fund of Funds program repay its initial investment to the state. Unfortunately, Republicans on the Joint Committee on Finance (JFC) [removed](#) this provision in the final 2021-23 and 2023-25 budgets.

AB 890, now Wisconsin Act 98, adopts the governor’s recommendations from the past two budgets to remove the requirement that the funds be repaid to the general fund, making the Badger Fund of Funds an evergreen program that can continue to reinvest in Wisconsin venture capital funds and support the state’s entrepreneurial environment.

[Assembly Bill 890](#), now 2023 Wisconsin Act 98:

- Removes the current law requirement that the fund of funds repay the initial \$25 million that the state appropriated for the program in fiscal year 2013-14;
- Allows reinvestment of the proceeds of those investments in future funding rounds under the program;
- Loosens the current matching requirements to allow the fund to meet the private capital matching requirements on an average basis for the entire fund rather than meeting the requirement for each investment;
- Amends the 2023 Wisconsin Act 19 language to specify that the new \$25 million must be committed to at least four investments in venture capital headquartered in Wisconsin within 24 months after receiving the monies; and
- Extends the current annual reporting requirements by the fund of the funds manager to reinvested funds under the program and requires DOA submit a report to JFC assessing the performance-to-date of the investment program and any recommendations for improvement to the program by March 1, 2024.

Early Literacy Program

Gov. Evers today also approved SB 971, now 2023 Wisconsin Act 100, with line-item vetoes. The bill makes modifications to [2023 Wisconsin Act 20](#), which established an early literacy program in Wisconsin. The 2023-25 biennial budget signed by Gov. Evers [includes](#)

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\$50 million in JFC's supplemental appropriation for efforts to improve reading and literacy outcomes for K-12 students, including those included in 2023 Wisconsin Act 20, which made several comprehensive updates to literacy instruction in the state.

"Doing what's best for our kids means making sure our kids have the reading and literacy tools and skills to be successful both in and out of the classroom, as is improving reading and literacy outcomes for kids across our state," said Gov. Evers. "Strong reading and literacy skills are critical for our kids' academic and personal growth, helping to expand their vocabulary, writing skills, social-emotional wellness, and much more. I am hopeful that the department and the Joint Committee on Finance will work quickly to release funding to support the important work of improving reading and literacy outcomes for our kids."



2023 Wisconsin Act 100 effectuates 2023 Wisconsin Act 20 by creating a new appropriation relating to early literacy. The appropriation will help fund literacy coaches, provide early literacy curricula grants for schools, and support the Office of Literacy at the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI).

The governor's partial veto to SB 971 fixes an inadvertent or intentional error that could have provided ongoing per-pupil increases to private choice or independent charter schools, provides DPI with maximum flexibility to administer the early literacy program, and removes the July 1, 2028, repeal date of the appropriation, ensuring that it is available to receive funds to support literacy efforts for the foreseeable future.

The single appropriation created through the governor's partial veto allows DPI to administer the literacy coaching program, curriculum grants, and financial assistance for early literacy professional development effectively and efficiently. Additionally, the governor's veto removes the July 1, 2028, sunset, creating flexibility to invest in literacy programs for as long as the state has funding available and as long as decisionmakers invest in improving reading instruction in Wisconsin.

Finally, Gov. Evers' improvements fix a bill provision that benefits only private choice schools and independent charter schools. As drafted, either intentionally or inadvertently, private choice schools and independent charter schools could receive an ongoing increase in per pupil funding

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because the bill does not contain standard provisions to exclude the newly created categorical appropriation from the indexing formula used to increase per pupil payments for private choice, independent charter, Special Needs Scholarship, and open enrollment students. No such funding increase would be provided to public school districts under the bill. Gov. Evers' partial veto remedies this issue.

[Senate Bill 971](#) , now 2023 Wisconsin Act 100:

- Creates a continuing appropriation for the Office of Literacy and literacy programs; and
- Adds the director of the Office of Literacy to the list of positions assigned to executive salary group 3.

The governor's veto message detailing his partial vetoes of SB 971, now Wisconsin Act 100, is available [here](#) .

Hunting Regulations



Finally, Gov. Evers also signed SB 780, now 2023 Wisconsin Act 99, increasing the fees for nonresident archer hunting licenses and nonresident crossbow hunting licenses in the state of Wisconsin. In 2023, the fee for nonresident deer hunting firearm licenses was raised to \$197.25 in recognition of the value of Wisconsin's hunting and wild game, and this bill brings the archer and crossbow licenses into alignment. The additional revenue generated by this change will support important wildlife habitat and management activities.

According to testimony provided by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, as of

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November 2023, the department had sold 5,882 nonresident crossbow licenses and 9,638 nonresident archer licenses for the 2023-24 license year.

[Senate Bill 780](#) , now 2023 Wisconsin Act 99:

- Increases fees for the nonresident archer hunting license and the nonresident crossbow hunting license by \$35, from \$162.25 to \$197.25.