

GOVERNOR'S VETO MESSAGE

April 22, 2021

Respectfully submitted,
TONY EVERS
Governor

To the Honorable Members of the Assembly:

I am vetoing **Assembly Bill 235** in its entirety.

This bill requires the Governor to allocate \$100,000,000 of funds under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) for the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) and Department of Revenue (DOR) for rural economic development and farm support programs. I welcome support for our farmers, agricultural industries, and rural communities, which is why I previously called a special session of the Wisconsin State Legislature to address the pressing issues facing our state and to bolster rural prosperity. Unfortunately, none of those proposals ever reached my desk last session. The \$100,000,000 would be divided between \$50,000,000 to WEDC for various rural economic development programs, including entrepreneurial start-up efforts in rural counties, and \$50,000,000 for farm support grants administered by DOR in consultation with the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection.

I object to this bill and am vetoing it because it limits the ability to use federal funds with the flexibility necessary to confront the variety of challenges posed by recovery from the COVID-19 global pandemic and respond to Wisconsin's changing needs over the course of the pandemic and our recovery. In Wisconsin, the role of the Governor to oversee use of federal funds under Section 16.54 of the Wisconsin Statutes is clearly established and has been in place for decades, a fact that was confirmed by legislative leadership in a letter they sent to me in April 2020.

In lieu of this bill, I will continue to utilize the authority provided to the Governor under Section 16.54 of the Wisconsin Statutes to oversee use of federal funds and will allocate these funds in a manner that is transparent and consistent with both Wisconsin's needs and federal law. Using this authority, I have announced that I will use ARPA funds to advance several economic assistance programs, including \$600 million in assistance to small businesses, which will benefit all regions of the state, including our rural communities and areas.

Further, I look forward to working with the Legislature to pass my budget proposal, which includes several initiatives which build on the proposals from my previously called special session as well as proposals supported by my Blue Ribbon Commission on Rural Prosperity.