

GOVERNOR'S VETO MESSAGE

April 22, 2021

To the Honorable Members of the Assembly:

I am vetoing **Assembly Bill 239** in its entirety.

This bill requires the Governor to allocate \$500,000,000 of the federal funds received by the state under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) to provide broadband expansion grants administered by the Public Service Commission (PSC). Under the bill, the commission would be required to award \$125,000,000 annually each calendar year between 2021 and 2024. The bill would also require the PSC to submit an annual report to the Joint Committee on Finance no later than the September 1, following the completion of the fiscal year, that details the criteria used for evaluating and awarding grant applications, the recipients of the grants, and the commission's evaluation of the applications of grant recipients for grants awarded in the preceding fiscal year. I am vetoing this bill because I have several objections.

I object to the 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 already announced my intent to direct a significant amount of the new federal funds under ARPA to provide for broadband expansion.

I am however pleased to see that the Legislature agrees with my call for robust investment in broadband expansion which I included in both my proposed 2021-23 biennial budget and in my announced plans for ARPA funds. I look forward to working with the Legislature to enact my proposed initiatives for broadband expansion and affordability in the biennial budget.

Respectfully submitted,
TONY EVERS
Governor