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**Gov. Walker defends, signs Republicans' lame-duck legislation**

Republicans at the Capitol are trying to counter the narrative that the lame-duck bills passed by the GOP are a power grab meant to undermine incoming Democrats Tony Evers, the future governor, and Josh Kaul, the next attorney general.

And the leading voice for Republicans is outgoing Gov. Scott Walker, who on Friday signed the three bills into law.

Walker on Dec. 11 said the lame-duck legislation doesn't amount to "a fundamental shift in powers" away from Evers and Kaul. During the signing ceremony Friday in Green Bay, Walker told reporters “the overwhelming executive of authority I have as governor today will remain constant with the next governor.”

Criticizing the "huge misinformation out there" about the bills, Walker told reporters at a stop in Pewaukee that Evers would still have authority to appoint cabinet officials, offer a biennial budget and wield a powerful veto pen, adding: "none of that goes away."

"So for all this hype and hysteria, much of which I think is driven by fundraising for political purposes, the bottom line is there's not a fundamental shift in powers, no matter what happens with this legislation," he said.

Walker's comments came after he issued a statement hinting at his support for some of the extraordinary session bills. He also said he shut down suggestions from lawmakers to go after the governor’s sweeping veto powers in the extraordinary session bills.

"I said, 'No, I would not support that. There's no way I would support that, because that would take power away from the governor,'" he said.

Walker signed all three bills in their entirety, despite suggesting he'd "most likely" use his line-item veto power on parts the bills that cleared the Legislature amid controversy and after an all-night session.

One veto Walker said he had been considering was altering language that would give the Wisconsin Economic Development Corp. board the power to pick the CEO, he said. Evers’ ability to appoint the agency head would be restored Sept. 1. Walker said Evers raised the issue in a call between the two.

And Walker said he had "concerns" with provisions surrounding Medicaid, though he didn't elaborate. The legislation includes language that would codify the implementation of a waiver to make changes to the state's program. Health care organizations warned the changes could lead to "unforeseen implementation challenges" that could harm the program and its members.

Walker wrote in a social media post his criteria for signing the extraordinary session bills Republicans approved included if they improved transparency, increased accountability, affirmed stability and protected taxpayers.

In a Facebook post, Walker argued the "new governor" would still have significant powers if he signed the bills.

Walker wrote that includes the broadest line-item veto of any governor, the ability to make appointments, sign off on administrative rules and pardon convicted felons, among other things.

"Let's set the record straight — the new governor will still have some of the strongest powers of any governor in the nation if these bills become law," Walker wrote to open the post.

Britt Cudaback, a spokeswoman for Governor-elect Tony Evers, said Walker knows voters "demanded a change" on Nov. 6 and urged Republicans to "stop putting politics before people and to start working together with the incoming Evers administration on the pressing issues facing our state."

"Governor Walker knows this and needs to decide whether he wants the final act of his legacy to be overriding the will of the people," she said.

Walker highlighted four provisions in the post in describing his criteria:

» He wrote it seemed "reasonable" for the public to know if a convicted felon is pardoned by the governor.

» He wrote it "makes sense" that lawmakers should "have some say in how the state might spend a multi-million legal settlement." One provision would require the attorney general to submit settlements to the Legislature for review.

» He also wrote it "makes sense" to put in statute waivers the state received from the federal government.

» Walker also signaled support for a provision that would make clear new revenue from online sales would go to income tax reductions. The 2013-15 budget included a provision saying revenue from some online sales would go to tax cuts if Congress approved states collecting the money from retailers that don't have a physical presence in their jurisdictions. But the collections were approved by a U.S. Supreme Court decision.

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