



Tony Evers

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

April 3, 2026

To the Honorable Members of the Assembly:

I am vetoing Assembly Bill 629 in its entirety.

This bill would authorize law enforcement officers to take certain actions against certain drones, including detection, identification, monitoring, and tracking the drone, warning the operator of the drone, disrupting, disabling, or seizing control of the drone, and using reasonable force to disable, damage, or destroy the drone. This authorization would be subject to existing authorization under 6 USC 124n of federal law, which generally authorizes actions to mitigate credible threats posed by unmanned aircraft systems as part of the SAFER SKIES Act. The bill would also make it a Class H felony to use a "weaponized drone" that poses a threat to public safety over a state or local correctional institution without express authorization. For this purpose, the bill would define "weaponized drone" as a drone that is equipped with a "taser, firearm, flamethrower, chemical, or explosive device."

I am vetoing this bill because I object to its adoption without sufficient clarity as to the division of powers between federal, state, local, and Tribal law enforcement. It was only a few months ago that the President signed the SAFER SKIES Act into law as part of the National Defense Authorization Act. The authority that the SAFER SKIES Act gives state, local, and Tribal law enforcement agencies to mitigate drone threats is temporary, extending only through 2031, and by its terms will require further federal administrative rulemaking and training development. I am concerned this legislation does not adequately consider these pending developments to avoid any federal conflict and to ensure that any policies adopted by law enforcement agencies in Wisconsin are consistent. As incidents around El Paso, Texas, in February 2026 have shown, haphazard responses to perceived drone threats can increase panic and disruption.

I am also vetoing this bill because I object to its creation of inconsistencies and conflict with current law. The bill would make it a Class H felony to operate a weaponized drone over a correctional institution without authorization if "the use of which poses a threat to public safety." But, subject to certain exceptions for the military, it is already a Class H felony to operate a weaponized drone under s. 941.292. Not only would the bill's additional criminal penalty be redundant, but it also does not include considerations for the military and its additional conflict with the elements of the existing crime. Further, while the bill would define "drone" by cross-referencing the definition of that term as it is used for the current crime of possessing a weaponized drone, the bill would create further uncertainty and enforcement issues by leaving the term "weaponized drone" undefined for the purposes of the current crime of operating a weaponized drone under s. 941.292, despite the bill defining it for the new criminal offense.



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Also, the bill's definition of "weaponized drone" is problematic. It includes a drone that is equipped with a "taser." "Taser" is a trademark, and under s. 941.295(1c)(a) would be an "electric weapon." Past practice has demonstrated that references to trademarks in the statutes create needless restrictions. I suspect that the authors intended for the bill's definition of "weaponized drone" to apply to drones equipped with any electric weapon, not just those equipped with a specific brand. It is for a similar reason that my 2023-25 biennial budget recommended replacing a reference to "Shot Spotter" with "Gunfire Detection" in the Department of Justice's Shot Spotter Program appropriation under s. 20.455(2)(cv).

Taken together, the bill's timing and its conflicting and deficient provisions demonstrate that there are far too many outstanding issues that need resolution before this bill should be enacted.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tony Evers".

Tony Evers
Governor