
Tuesday, May 13, 2025

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Divided Senate passes all but handful of its budget bills while nixing dozens of GOP amendments

The Senate passed 15 of its 20 budget bills along party lines Tuesday, following the rejection of dozens of Republican amendments proposing additional funding for items including roads, immigration enforcement and several programs within K-12 and higher education.

Among the budgets passed were those for the departments of Health and Human Services ([SB 180](#)), Labor and Economic Opportunity ([SB 179](#)), higher education ([SB 167](#)) and Transportation ([SB 174](#)).

A total of 45 Republican floor amendments were rejected by the Democratic majority on Tuesday, including funding to support federal immigration enforcement, prevent the awarding of grant monies to companies seeking to do business in Michigan that are based in countries hostile to the United States and requiring the reporting of data on diversity, equity and inclusion funding at higher education institutions.

For the Department of Transportation budget, Senate Republicans' proposals to provide \$250 million for critical bridge infrastructure was shot down as well as \$1 billion in road funding for use in a Neighborhood Road Fund included in the road funding package the House passed earlier this year.

Each of the 15 budget bills passed Tuesday passed 19-18 along party lines.

Republicans spoke against many of the bills, saying although they are a starting point, there is much work needed for their caucus to

be able to provide any support.

"This budget does not do enough to help universities adapt and prepare for some of the long-term trends we are seeing," [Sen. Thomas Albert](#) (R-Lowell) said in opposing the higher education budget.

He said more should be done to help universities eliminate debt and reduce real estate holdings given flat or declining enrollment trends at many of the state's universities.

"If we don't start making decisions like this soon, we may face this scenario where some of our universities will not make it and will eventually have to be shut down," Albert said.

[Sen. John Damoose](#) (R-Harbor Springs), speaking against the Department of Transportation budget, said claims that have been made by Democrats that increased funding for roads and infrastructure cannot be obtained solely through existing funds are inaccurate.

"Michigan families are tired of broken promises," Damoose said. "We can fix the roads and still fund our schools, (have) police on the streets and maintain core government services all without raising taxes, but we have to make it a priority."

[Sen. Lana Theis](#) (R-Brighton) questioned boilerplate language in [SB 176](#) , the Department of State Police budget.

"This proposed budget fails to include things like additional funding for victims' support services adding language requiring preference that products be made in union facilities," Theis said. "When it comes to providing vital equipment for our state troopers, it shouldn't matter if it was made in a big union shop or in a small family-owned facility."

Although Republicans struck out on each of their floor amendments, multiple floor amendments from Democratic budget subcommittee chairs to individual bills were adopted prior to final passage.

For [SB 170](#) , the judiciary budget, an amendment expanded boilerplate language involving funding for the University of Michigan School of Law's innocence project and classified the funding as a work project with a completion date of September 30, 2030.

Under [SB 179](#) , the LEO budget, funding for the wage and hour program was increased by \$500,000.

Changes were made to [SB 174](#) , the MDOT budget, in boilerplate language governing a road user charge study, changing its start and completion dates. A \$100 placeholder for the Crimestoppers program was added to [SB 176](#) , the MSP budget.

Several line-item changes were made to [SB 180](#) , the DHHS budget, via amendment. Among them was a \$10 million funding increase for opioid response activities with corresponding changes to reflect it in boilerplate.

For [SB 181](#) , the Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy budget, additional provisions over grant funding for electric vehicle charging infrastructure were added to boilerplate as well as capping administrative costs at 5 percent of total funding.

A date change was added to the community colleges budget, [SB 168](#) , dealing with a provision governing capital outlay projects.

Also passed Tuesday were the budgets for capital outlay ([SB 163](#)); Lifelong Education, Advancement and Potential ([SB 164](#)); Education ([SB 165](#)); Agriculture and Rural Development ([SB 171](#)); Military and Veterans Affairs ([SB 175](#)); Licensing and Regulatory Affairs ([SB 177](#)) and Insurance and Financial Services ([SB 178](#)).

The five remaining bills are expected to be voted on Wednesday, those being for school aid ([SB 166](#)), Department of Corrections ([SB 169](#)), Department of Natural Resources ([SB 172](#)), general government ([SB 173](#)), and a supplemental appropriations bill for fiscal year 2024-25 ([SB 184](#)).

– By Nick Smith

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