



Salaries of Wisconsin State Elected Officials, 2021



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How salaries are determined

The process for setting the salaries of elected state officials requires the administrator of the Division of Personnel Management in the Department of Administration to submit proposed changes to the state compensation plan, which includes elected state officials, to the Joint Committee on Employment Relations. The state compensation plan is typically submitted after enactment of the biennial budget act, usually in the summer of the odd-numbered year. If approved by the committee, the plan goes into effect. The committee may modify the administrator's proposal; these modifications are subject to the governor's veto and may be disapproved by the governor within 10 calendar days, but a vote of six members of the committee may set aside the governor's action. On December 18, 2019, the Joint Committee on Employment Relations approved the 2019–21 state compensation plan, which remains in effect until June 30, 2021.

Sections 20.923 and 230.12 (3) (a) and (b) of the Wisconsin Statutes, as created by 1973 Chapter 90 and amended by 1983 Wisconsin Act 27, 2003 Wisconsin Act 33, 2015 Wisconsin Act 55, and 2017 Wisconsin Acts 59, 74, 143, and 366, provide the procedure for establishing the pay levels of elected state officials. Prior to 2015 Wisconsin Act 55, the administration of the compensation plan was performed by the Office of State Employment Relations, which was eliminated by 2015 Wisconsin Act 55 and its powers and duties transferred to DOA's Division of Personnel Management.

Article IV, section 26 (2), of the Wisconsin Constitution provides that “the compensation of a public officer may not be increased or diminished during the term of office.” Constitutional amendments have created two exceptions:

1. An April 1992 constitutional amendment provided that all legislators, including those elected in special elections, receive the same salary throughout the legislature's biennial session. This allows holdover senators (those in the middle of a four-year term) to receive an adjustment when the new legislature is inaugurated, so that their salary matches that of newly elected senators and representatives to the assembly.
2. Since 1967, the constitution has provided that the salaries of the entire judicial branch are adjusted to reflect the salary schedule in effect when any new justice or judge takes office.

Constitutional officers in the executive branch

Constitutional officers in the executive branch may not receive a pay raise during their terms of office. All elected officers in the executive branch, except the superintendent of public instruction, began serving four-year terms in January 2019. Thus, they will receive the salaries in effect at the time they began their terms until the expiration of their terms in January 2023. If an incumbent resigns, dies, or is removed, the officer assuming the office through appointment or election—or succession if the lieutenant governor assumes

the office of the governor—will receive the salary provided in the compensation plan that is applicable at the time he or she takes office. The salaries of all officers were increased by approximately 4 percent from the previous term. Salaries for constitutional officers in the executive branch who assume office on or after January 3, 2021, are as follows:

Governor—\$159,183

Lieutenant Governor—\$84,012

Secretary of State—\$75,504

State Treasurer—\$75,504

Attorney General—\$154,461

State Superintendent of Public Instruction—\$132,351

Members of the 2021 Wisconsin Legislature

The salary of legislators serving in the 2021 Wisconsin Legislature is \$55,141. The salary was increased by 4 percent from the \$52,999 rate that had been in effect for the previous biennium. The Speaker of the Assembly receives an additional stipend, which is currently \$25 per month.

Section 13.123 (1) of the Wisconsin Statutes and Joint Rule 85 authorize legislators to claim a per diem allowance for food and lodging expenses for each day spent in Madison on legislative business, not including Saturdays or Sundays unless the legislator is in Madison on one of those days attending a session of the legislature or a meeting of a standing committee as a member of the committee. Members may also receive reimbursement for actual expenses incurred in attending committee meetings outside Madison.

2001 Wisconsin Act 16 set the legislative per diem at 90 percent of the rate established by the U.S. General Services Administration for travel by federal employees to Madison. However, under article IV, section 8, of the Wisconsin Constitution, which provides that each house of the legislature may determine the rules of its own proceedings, the organization committee of each house sets the actual maximum per diem rates that may be claimed by members.

In the 2021–22 legislative session, the per diem rate for representatives is \$153 per overnight stay, and the rate for a day visit is \$76.50. The maximum number of days that may be claimed for per diem per year is 153 days. In the senate, the maximum per diem rate is \$115 per day for senators who do not reside in Dane County. Senators who reside in Dane County may choose to be reimbursed for up to half of that amount, or \$57.50.

Judicial branch

The salaries of all justices and judges are adjusted to the schedule in the state compensation plan whenever any member of the judicial branch takes office, at which time salaries of all

jurists are also adjusted to the applicable amounts in the plan. The amounts in the schedule are applicable beginning on January 3, 2021. Judicial branch salaries are as follows:

Supreme Court Justice—\$165,772

Court of Appeals Judge—\$156,388

Circuit Court Judge—\$147,535

District attorneys

The compensation plan also sets the salaries of district attorneys, who are elected in each prosecutorial district but are paid by the state. The salaries vary depending upon the population of the prosecutorial unit and currently range from a high of \$148,200 in prosecutorial units with populations above 750,000 to a low of \$108,431 in prosecutorial units with populations of 35,000 or below. As with constitutional officers, salaries of district attorneys may not be increased during their four-year terms of office. However, a district attorney who takes office by special election or appointment will receive the applicable rate of pay provided in the compensation plan.¹ ■

1. State of Wisconsin Compensation Plan, 2019–21, Section B, Division of Personnel Management, Department of Administration, <https://dpm.wi.gov>.