



# Profile of the 2019 Wisconsin Legislature

Emma Gradian  
legislative analyst



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One East Main Street, Suite 200, Madison, Wisconsin 53703  
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The first Wisconsin Legislature convened in 1848. For most legislators elected that session, serving in the legislature was a part-time position that separated them from their families, farms, or businesses for only part of the year. More than 170 years later, members of the 2019 legislature face some of those same challenges but serve the state in a full-time legislature; many have left behind careers and small businesses and sacrificed family and personal time. This report profiles the members of the Wisconsin Legislature as of January 31, 2019.

## Senate profile

The Wisconsin Senate has 33 members, including 19 Republicans and 14 Democrats. Of the total, eight senators are women and two are African American women.

**Legislative experience.** Of the 17 seats up for election in 2018, 13 members of the 2017 Senate were reelected<sup>1</sup> and four new members were elected. Three of the four new Senators have previous legislative experience. Sixteen members are senators in the middle of their terms.

Twenty-five senators served previously in the Assembly. In the 2019 Senate, six senators have served ten or more sessions; five have served between five and nine sessions; and the remaining 22 have served fewer than five sessions. Notably, Senator Fred Risser (D–Senate District 26) is the longest-serving legislator in the United States and has the longest legislative tenure in Wisconsin history, with 28 sessions in the Senate and 3 in the Assembly for a total of 62 years of service.

Three senators had previous experience in a legislative staff position. Two worked for either a state senator or state representative. Another two worked as staff for members of the U.S. Congress.

**Local government experience.** 19 senators have had experience in local government as elected public officials: seven served as county board supervisors; two served on city councils; three were on a school board; and four were on a town or village board.

**Age.** As of January 31, 2019, the average age of a senator is 58, making this the oldest Senate since at least 1943. The youngest senator is 31 years of age and the oldest is 91 years of age.<sup>2</sup>

**Occupation.** Twenty-two senators list themselves as full-time legislators. Three senators are practicing attorneys. Most others are small-business owners in a variety of fields, from farm supplies to real estate.

**Education.** All 33 senators continued their formal education beyond high school. Seventeen have an academic degree and seven attended either a technical school or a

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1. This number includes Senator Patty Schachtner (D–Senate District 10) who was elected to the Senate in the January 2018 special election and then reelected in the November 2018 general election.

2. At the age of 91, Senator Risser is the oldest person to serve in the Wisconsin Senate.

college or university. Nine senators continued on to graduate studies and hold master's degrees in fields ranging from education to public administration.

**Military service.** Seven senators have served in the nation's armed forces, including the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, the U.S. Army Reserve, and the Air National Guard. One senator is a World War II veteran, one is a Persian Gulf War veteran, and two are Iraq War veterans.

## Assembly profile

There are 99 representatives elected to the Wisconsin Assembly, including 63 Republicans, 35 Democrats, and one vacant seat.<sup>3</sup> This is the largest majority held by one party in the Assembly since the 1957 session in which the Republicans held 67 seats. This session, 28 members are women, four more than in the 2017 session. Six representatives are African American and three are Hispanic.

**Legislative experience.** Eighty-one representatives were reelected in 2018, while 18 are serving their first terms in the Assembly. Only one candidate defeated an incumbent in the 2018 general election. The longest-serving member is Representative Christine Sinicki (D–Assembly District 20), who has served in the Assembly since 1999.

Ten representatives have had previous experience in a legislative staff position. Five worked for members of the U.S. Congress, five worked in the state legislature, and one worked for both Congress and the state legislature.

**Local government experience.** Of the 64 representatives who have been locally elected officials, 10 held office at both the county and the municipal levels, 13 held county offices, and 31 held municipal offices.

Nineteen representatives have served as county board supervisors or board members. Sixteen representatives were city council members, five were town board members, and three were village trustees. Five have served as school board members. Three have served as city mayors, and one as village president. Representative Todd Novak (R–Assembly District 51) currently serves as mayor of Dodgeville and has done so since 2012.

**Age.** As of January 31, 2019, the average age of a representative is 49. The youngest representative is 19 years of age<sup>4</sup> and the oldest is 80 years of age.

**Occupation.** Forty-seven representatives list themselves as full-time legislators. Among the other representatives, 30 list themselves as business owners or self-employed. Other current occupations include realtor, photographer, director of a nonprofit orga-

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3. Representative Peter Barca (D–Assembly District 64) resigned from the Assembly in January 2019 to become the secretary of revenue.

4. At the age of 19, Representative Kalan Haywood (D–Assembly District 16) is the youngest person to serve in the Wisconsin Assembly.

nization, and many small-business owners. Former occupations range from educator to probation officer.

**Education.** Of the representatives who continued their formal education beyond high school, 47 hold academic degrees and 66 attended college, university, or agricultural, business, technical, or trade school after high school graduation. Forty-seven representatives hold bachelor's degrees in a variety of fields, and twenty-four representatives continued on to pursue a graduate degree (including law school).

**Military service.** Nine representatives have served in the nation's armed forces, including the Navy, the Air Force, the U.S. Army Reserve, the U.S. Naval Reserve, the U.S. Army Air Defense, and the Air National Guard. One representative served in the Vietnam War, three representatives served in the Persian Gulf War, and one representative served in both the Persian Gulf and Iraq Wars. ■

**Personal data on Wisconsin legislators, 2009–2019 sessions**

	2009		2011		2013		2015		2017		2019	
	Sen.	Rep.	Sen.	Rep.*	Sen.	Rep.	Sen.	Rep.	Sen.	Rep.	Sen.	Rep. <sup>1</sup>
<b>Party affiliation:</b>												
Democrat .....	18	52	14	38	15	39	14	36	13	35	15	34
Republican.....	15	46	19	60	18	60	19	63	20	64	18	64
<b>Number with previous legislative service:</b>												
In Senate.....	31	0	26	0	30	0	27	0	30	0	28	0
In Assembly .....	23	86	23	69	25	74	24	74	24	83	26	82
Highest number of prior sessions in same house ...	23	19	24	14	25	13	26	14	27	12	28	10
<b>Occupations:</b>												
Full-time legislator.....	11	39	11	32	12	35	11	34	24	56	22	47
Attorney .....	3	12	3	8	3	7	2	7	2	6	2	7
Farmer .....	3	5	2	6	2	4	1	6	1	7	1	6
Other .....	16	43	16	53	16	53	19	52	6	30	9	39
<b>Education:</b>												
High school only .....	1	7	0	4	1	5	1	4	0	5	0	8
Beyond high school ...	32	92	33	95	32	94	32	95	5	20	7	19
Bachelor's or associate degree .....	29	69	29	73	28	72	28	69	18	48	17	47
Advanced degree .....	11	35	10	27	9	27	9	24	10	26	9	24
<b>Number with experience on local governing body:</b>												
County board .....	4	15	6	16	7	18	9	19	9	26	7	19
Municipal board.....	12	30	9	29	11	30	9	29	16	49	14	41
<b>Age (shown in years):</b>												
Oldest .....	81	80	83	72	85	72	87	76	89	78	91	80
Youngest.....	38	29	30	25	32	25	34	24	36	26	31	19
Average.....	55	50	56	49	57	49	57	48	58	49	58	49
Veterans .....	2	16	2	13	2	10	3	7	7	10	7	9
Number of women .....	7	22	8	23	9	24	11	22	9	22	8	28

\*Includes one Independent

Sen.–Senators; Rep.–Representatives

1. 2019 assembly data does not include Assembly District 64, which has recently been vacated.