



LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU

Black Members of the Wisconsin Legislature: An Overview

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Introduction

When the 2023 Wisconsin State Legislature convened on January 3, 2023, 10 Black legislators took their seats in the assembly and the senate. This remains the largest number of Black lawmakers in Wisconsin history to serve together in the state legislature. Of the more than 5,650 people who are estimated to have served in the Wisconsin State Legislature since 1848,¹ only 33 have been identified in the press as Black or African American, but the proportion of Black legislators has increased steadily over the past half century.² This paper provides a brief introduction to the service, achievements, and leadership of Wisconsin's Black lawmakers.

Suffrage

While Wisconsin was the first state in the Midwest to enfranchise Black men, it took decades of organized struggle, a Civil War, and ultimately a Wisconsin Supreme Court case to confirm this right. During the territorial period, the right to suffrage was not guaranteed to Black people in Wisconsin.³ As UW–Madison historian Christy Clark-Pujara notes, Black Wisconsinites were ineligible for public office and thus excluded from debates surrounding the organization of early state government.⁴ The question of Black suffrage drew interest from reform-minded lawmakers and became enmeshed in other hot-button issues like banking reform, women's property rights, and the status of Wisconsin's Indigenous population. When the state's first constitutional convention convened in 1846, several vitriolic debates over free Black male suffrage left the convention divided. Milwaukee's James Magone proposed striking out "male"—thereby giving women suffrage rights too—in an effort to ridicule the question.⁵ Motions in favor of Black suffrage, including a proposal to simply strike the word "white" from the suffrage clauses, ultimately failed, leading one observer to declare that "political abolitionism finds no favor with this convention."⁶

1. This estimate builds upon a previous estimate calculated for "Serving the State: Wisconsin Legislators, 1848–2019," *Wisconsin History Project* 1, no. 1 (Madison, WI: Legislative Reference Bureau, April 2019).

2. Legislators are not required to file demographic information with the Legislative Reference Bureau or any other agency. Consequently, the LRB does not collect or track demographic data and relies on press mentions for the figures provided in this report.

3. See [Act 69](#), Territorial Laws of 1836, section 12: "No person shall be entitled to vote at any election in this territory who has not attained the age of twenty-one years, who is not a free white male citizen, or foreigner duly naturalized according to the acts of congress on that subject, and who has not resided in this territory for at least six months immediately previous to his application to vote." *Acts Passed at the First Session of the Legislative Assembly for the Territory of Wisconsin* (Belmont, Wisconsin Territory: James Clarke, 1836).

4. Christy Clark-Pujara, "Contested: Black Suffrage in Early Wisconsin," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 100, no. 4 (summer 2017): 21–27.

5. Leslie H. Fishel, Jr. "Wisconsin and Negro Suffrage," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 46, no. 3 (spring 1963): 180–96.

6. Milo Milton Quaipe, *The Struggle Over Ratification, 1846–1847*, vol. 28 (Madison, WI: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1920), 110. Throughout the convention, issue of Black suffrage was linked to a variety of other "radical" issues facing the convention, including women's property rights and suffrage for foreign emigrants and Indigenous peoples. The question of Indigenous suffrage proved particularly thorny. See Bethel Saler, *The Settlers' Empire: Colonialism and State Formation in America's Old Northwest* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2015), 260–72.

Upon reconvening in 1848, state delegates debated whether they—or the people of Wisconsin—should decide the question of Black suffrage. Convention delegates ultimately composed a resolution that declared, “The legislature shall at any time have the power to admit colored persons to the right of suffrage but no such act of the legislature shall become law until the same shall have been submitted to the electors at the next general election succeeding the passage of the same and shall have received in its favor a majority of all the votes cast at such election.”⁷ Subsequently, in 1849, Wisconsin legislators authorized a referendum on the question of “Equal suffrage to colored persons.”⁸ The results of the referendum, conducted on a separate ballot, came in at 5,265 in favor to 4,075 opposed. However, the State Board of Canvassers counted abstentions from the referendum as votes *against* the measure. Consequently, the measure failed.

Over the next two decades, Black Wisconsinites continued to pursue their right to suffrage. Milwaukee’s Black community organized petitions for new referendums on the suffrage question. One of the petitioners was a Black Milwaukeean named Ezekiel Gillespie. In 1865, Gillespie, accompanied by local abolitionist Sherman Booth, attempted to cast a vote in the general election. When officials refused to accept his ballot, Gillespie took his case to court, arguing that the election inspectors “wrongfully and illegally refused to receive the plaintiff’s vote, or to deposit the same in the ballot box, for the sole reason that he was a person of African descent.”⁹ Gillespie, alongside white abolitionists, brought the case to the Wisconsin Supreme Court, which ruled in a unanimous decision that Black men had been granted suffrage through the 1849 referendum.¹⁰

Early mobilizations

Following the Civil War, Black men became increasingly involved in politics in the North.¹¹ In Wisconsin, Black politicians made periodic breakthroughs at the local level: P.D. Thomas was elected coroner of Racine County in the early 1900s; James Parrish served as alderman of the City of Waupaca for three successive terms; and J.B. Perkins was elected justice of the peace in La Crosse in 1904.¹²

As the city of Milwaukee’s Black population grew, Black politics became more organized, and political leaders emerged from Masonic lodges and churches.¹³ One such

7. Fishel, “Wisconsin and Negro Suffrage.”

8. [Ch. 137](#), Laws of 1849.

9. Gillespie v. Palmer, 28 Wis. 544 (1866).

10. Clark-Pujara, “Contested: Black Suffrage in Early Wisconsin.”

11. Illinois was the first state in the Midwest and the second state in the North to send a Black man to its state legislature, electing John W.E. Thomas in 1877. Ohio and Indiana elected their first Black legislators in 1880. Michigan followed in 1893, and Minnesota in 1899. Iowa did not elect a Black representative until 1965. See David Joens, *From Slave to State Legislator: John W.E. Thomas, Illinois’ First African American Lawmaker* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2012).

12. “Race Recognition at Last,” *Wisconsin Weekly Advocate*, November 8, 1906.

13. See Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003) and ed. Stephen Kantrowitz and Peter P. Hinks, *All Men Free and Brethren:*

leader was Lucian H. Palmer, a respected member of both Milwaukee's Prince Hall Masonic Lodge and St. Mark A.M.E Church. Palmer established a successful career for himself in hospitality: he managed Lakeside Resort in Pewaukee, built a successful catering business, and eventually became steward of the Milwaukee Yacht Club.¹⁴ He also held a number of appointed positions, indicating his proximity to influential people.¹⁵ In 1906, Palmer sought election to the assembly to represent Milwaukee's Sixth District. He ran an active campaign—supporters met weekly at the law offices of prominent Black lawyer William T. Green—and won, receiving 1,668 votes against 1,601 for the Democratic incumbent, Thomas Ramsey. *The Wisconsin Weekly Advocate*, one of Milwaukee's first Black newspapers, praised his campaign team and declared "Race Recognition at last."¹⁶

Assembly firsts

In January 1907, Lucian H. Palmer was sworn in to the assembly, becoming the state's first Black legislator. Palmer's district was composed of the Third Ward—noted by newspapers as the richest district in the state—as well as the Fourth and Seventh Wards.¹⁷ In the aftermath of Palmer's election, some individuals attempted to undermine his surprise victory, claiming he did not reside in the district that elected him.¹⁸ Meanwhile, Palmer's white neighbors organized and campaigned to have his landlord evict him.¹⁹ But Palmer proved undaunted. As a legislator, Palmer introduced a resolution protesting the racially motivated discharge of 167 Black soldiers in Brownsville, Texas;²⁰ invited a Black speaker to deliver an address on racial justice in the assembly chamber;²¹ and successfully convinced colleagues to vote down measures he opposed.²² Within months, the same newspaper that had dismissively characterized Palmer's election as a fluke would recognize that Palmer had single-handedly killed a bill otherwise expected to pass.²³ The notion of a Black politician was no longer unthinkable in Wisconsin.

Essays on the History of African American Freemasonry (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013).

14. "Mr. Lucian H. Palmer," *Wisconsin Weekly Advocate*, January 18, 1906.

15. U.S. weigher of mail, commissioner for Wisconsin for "Negro exhibits" at the New Orleans exposition, and census enumerator. See *The Blue Book of the State of Wisconsin*, comp. J. D. Beck (Madison, WI: Democrat Printing Company, State Printer, 1907), 1161.

16. Palmer's campaign team included W. T. Green, A. Maxwell Palmer, future candidate for Milwaukee Common Council Alex Price, and S.R. Banks. "Race Recognition at Last," *Wisconsin Weekly Advocate*, November 8, 1906; "Two Democrats and One Negro Elected," *La Crosse Tribune*, November 7, 1906.

17. "Two Democrats and One Negro Elected."

18. "M'Govern Wins by Close Vote; State Ticker Is In," *La Crosse Tribune*, November 7, 1906. See also "Honor to Whom Honor is Due," *Wisconsin Weekly Advocate*, November 15, 1906.

19. "Milwaukee Women War on Negro Solon," *Minneapolis Journal*, December 9, 1906.

20. "Colored Man's Request," *La Crosse Tribune*, February 14, 1907.

21. "Negro and Socialist in Debate," *Eau Claire Leader*, March 31, 1907; "Pleads Chance for Negro," *Wisconsin State Journal*, March 22, 1907.

22. "Negro and Socialist in Debate," *Eau Claire Leader*, March 31, 1907; "Colored Member Speaks," *Daily Northwestern* (Oshkosh, WI), June 29, 1907; "Capitol Park Scheme Killed," *Daily Journal* (Racine, WI), July 1, 1907.

23. "Colored Member Speaks," *Daily Northwestern* (Oshkosh, WI), June 29, 1907.

Still, after Palmer completed his two-year term, he lost a three-way primary campaign for the Republican party nomination. No Black official was elected to the legislature for the next 18 sessions, a gap of 36 years. In the early twentieth century, Black Wisconsinites composed a very small percentage of the population, giving them minimal power at the polls, even in cities with growing Black communities, such as Milwaukee, Beloit, and Madison.²⁴ Still, Black Wisconsinites remained engaged in politics. And although internal disagreements splintered potential voting blocks, the number of Black candidates for city, county, and state offices reached unprecedented levels between 1933 and 1945.²⁵ After World War II, Wisconsin's Black population increased dramatically, and Black communities allied themselves with the Democratic Party, which helped elect Black leaders to local offices.²⁶ This partnership helped secure an electoral victory for Cleveland Colbert of Milwaukee's Sixth Ward on November 3, 1942. But this victory was fleeting. While the initial canvass reported Colbert as winning by six votes, his white opponent, Progressive Philip Markey, challenged the results. The recount found Markey to have won by 10 votes, and Markey was inaugurated as a member of the assembly.²⁷

In November 1944, Democrat Le Roy Simmons²⁸ handily defeated the incumbent Markey to represent the assembly's Milwaukee-6 District as the state's second Black legislator.²⁹ Simmons served four terms in the assembly before being defeated by Isaac Coggs in the 1954 primary.³⁰ Coggs later won the general election and became the third Black member of the assembly.

During all but two sessions between 1945 and 1972, there was only one Black official serving in the legislature. In 1955, the incumbent Coggs and freshmen Assemblymen Cecil B. Brown Jr. and Walton Bryan Stewart became the first Black elected officials to serve together in the legislature.³¹ After spending the next three sessions as the only Black member of the legislature, Assemblyman Coggs served with one other Black assemblyman, Raymond Lee Lathan, during the 1963 session.

24. William F. Thompson, *The History of Wisconsin, Volume VI: Continuity and Change, 1940–1965* (Madison, WI: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1988), 322.

25. Joe W. Trotter, *Black Milwaukee: The Making of an Industrial Proletariat, 1915–1945* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 210.

26. Between 1940 and 1960, Wisconsin's Black population increased by nearly 600 percent. "[Black History in Wisconsin](#)" Wisconsin Historical Society, August 3, 2012.

27. Genevieve G. McBride and Stephen R. Byers, "The First Mayor of Black Milwaukee: J. Anthony Josey," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 91, no. 2 (winter 2007–08): 11. See also "Recount Defeats Negro Candidate," *Racine Journal Times*, November 15, 1942. The Assembly Committee on Elections investigated the recount itself, finding Markey to have won by nine votes and ultimately introducing a resolution that declared Markey the rightful winner. *Journal of Proceedings of the Sixty-Sixth Session of the Wisconsin Legislature, January 13–August 3, 1943* (Madison, WI: Democrat Printing Company, 1943), 344–48.

28. Sources refer to Simmons as Le Roy, LeRoy, and Leroy. For consistency, this paper adopts Le Roy.

29. Simmons won on a vote of 4,010 to 2,841. "Summary of Assembly Vote by Districts (November 1944)" in Howard F. Ohm and Hazel L. Kuehn, eds., *Wisconsin Blue Book, 1946* (Madison, WI: Legislative Reference Bureau, 1946), 676.

30. "Vote for Assemblymen by Districts, Primary Election" in M. G. Toepel and Hazel L. Kuehn, eds., *Wisconsin Blue Book, 1954* (Madison, WI: Legislative Reference Bureau, 1954), 664.

31. Note that members of the assembly were called "assemblymen" until the enactment of [Ch. 199](#), Laws of 1969, which specified that members of the assembly must be called "representatives."

In 1977, Representative Marcia Coggs, Isaac Coggs's widow, became the first Black woman to serve in the Wisconsin Legislature. In 1981, Coggs was joined in the assembly by Representative Annette Polly Williams, the second Black woman elected to serve in the legislature. Williams served in the assembly for a total of 15 sessions, or 30 years, longer than any other woman or Black legislator in state history.

Senate firsts

After mounting a successful primary challenge to Democratic incumbent Mark Lipscomb in September 1972, Monroe Swan became Wisconsin's first Black state senator in January 1973, representing the Sixth Senate District.³² Watching the inauguration ceremonies from the balcony was Mattie Belle Woods, campaign manager for former Assemblyman Le Roy Simmons, who remarked, "This is the moment I have been waiting for for many, many years."³³ Swan himself downplayed his unprecedented election. "Being the first black senator has no special legislative value," he remarked to reporters. Rather than dwell on this milestone, Swan said, he promised "to represent the interests of all the people in my district."³⁴

In 1981, Gary George succeeded Swan in representing the Sixth Senate District and became the state's second Black state senator. George went on to serve in the senate for a total of 12 sessions, or 24 years, longer than any other Black senator in state history. In 1993, Gwen Moore became the first Black woman seated in the senate.

Milestones in leadership

In the Wisconsin Legislature, committee chairpersons have the power to advance legislation by scheduling hearings on bills. In 1959, Assemblyman Isaac Coggs became the first Black legislator to chair a legislative committee when he was appointed to lead the assembly's Public Welfare Committee. Representative Lloyd Barbee, who succeeded Coggs to represent the Milwaukee-6 Assembly District, chaired the assembly's Enrolled Bills Committee and Judiciary Committee for two sessions. In 1981, Marcia Coggs became the first Black woman appointed to chair a legislative committee, the assembly's Aging, Women, and Minorities Committee. Presently, Senator Julian Bradley is chair of the Senate Committee on Utilities and Technology and cochair of the Joint Committee on Information Policy and Technology.

32. Swan's election was not without controversy, as Lipscomb alleged that Swan had committed voter fraud and violated the Corrupt Practices Act. However, a John Doe investigation found these allegations to be unsubstantiated, and the senate voted to seat Swan. Patricia Simms, "Swan Election Challenges," *Wisconsin State Journal*, December 29, 1972; "No Violations in Swan Case, Judge Declares," *Wisconsin State Journal*, January 27, 1973; "Senate Votes to Seat Swan, Allows Kasten to Abstain," *Capital Times*, February 7, 1973.

33. "First Black State Senator Is Nervous," *Daily Northwestern* (Oshkosh, WI), January 1, 1973.

34. Patricia Simms, "Choosing Challenge Unit Snags First Senate Session," *Wisconsin State Journal*, January 2, 1973.

The Joint Committee on Finance, considered one of the most powerful committees in the legislature because it is responsible for reviewing appropriations and revenue bills, as well as the biennial budget bill, gained its first Black member in 1965, when Representative Barbee was appointed to the committee. In addition to Barbee, six other Black legislators have been appointed to the committee: Representative Marcia Coggs, Senator Gary George, Representative Spencer Coggs, Representative Antonio Riley, Senator Lena Taylor, and Senator LaTonya Johnson. In 1984, Senator George became the first Black legislator to cochair the Joint Committee on Finance, a position he held until 1993. In 2012, Senator Taylor became the first Black woman to cochair the Joint Committee on Finance and second Black legislator to serve in that role.

Serving in party leadership positions is another way in which state senators and representatives have the power to shape their party's agenda and promote legislative proposals. In 1985, Representative Spencer Coggs was elected vice chair of the minority caucus in the assembly, becoming the first Black legislator to hold a position in party leadership in either house; he served in that capacity for three sessions.³⁵ In 1995, Senator Gwen Moore was elected senate majority caucus pro tempore, becoming the first Black legislator to hold a position in majority party leadership in the senate. In 2003, Representative Robert L. Turner, who had previously served as vice chair and sergeant at arms of the minority caucus, became the first Black legislator chosen to chair the assembly's minority caucus; he served in that capacity for two sessions. During the current legislative session, Representative Kalan Haywood continues to serve as assistant minority leader, a position to which he was elected in 2022.

Other notable milestones

With the exception of two legislators, all of Wisconsin's Black senators and representatives have been Democrats. Lucian Palmer was the first Black Republican to serve in the assembly, and he remains the only Black Republican ever to serve there. In January 2021, Julian Bradley, a first-time legislator, became the first Black Republican seated in the senate.

Over the past three decades, Black legislators have started to represent more districts in more counties. In 1991, Representative Turner became the first Black member of the legislature elected from a district in Racine County. Representative Shelia Stubbs, who represents a district covering the south and west sides of Madison, made history in 2019 when she became the first Black legislator to represent a Dane County district. In January 2021, Sambah Baldeh became the second Black legislator to represent a Dane County district. In January 2021, Senator Bradley became the first Black legislator to represent a

35. In a 2003 special election, Coggs, a nephew of Isaac and Marcia Coggs, was elected to the senate, where he served as the majority caucus's sergeant at arms during the 2007 session.

district spanning parts of four counties: Walworth, Racine, Waukesha, and Milwaukee. Aside from Representatives Turner, Baldeh, and Stubbs and Senator Bradley, each of the Black legislators who has served or is currently serving in the legislature has represented a district located entirely within Milwaukee County.

Representative Kalan Haywood is the youngest Black legislator ever elected to serve in the Wisconsin Assembly. At 19, Haywood was one of the youngest state legislators in the nation when he took office in 2019.³⁶

Of the seven Black representatives currently serving in the assembly, only one is a first-time legislator. Of the three Black legislators currently serving in the senate, two have previous experience serving in the assembly. Senator Taylor is currently the legislature's longest-serving Black member.

Conclusion

Wisconsin's pioneering Black legislators were literally few and far between, yet they overcame significant obstacles and racial prejudice to win elections, pursue far-ranging policy objectives, pave the way for other Black Wisconsinites to serve in the legislature, and hold other elected offices. ■

36. Wis. Legis. Reference Bureau, *2019–20 Wisconsin Blue Book* (Madison, WI: Legislative Reference Bureau, 2019), 161.

Timeline

- 1907** Lucian H. Palmer is seated in the assembly to become the state's first Black legislator.
- 1945** Assemblyman Le Roy Simmons becomes the state's second Black legislator.
- 1955** Assemblymen Cecil B. Brown Jr., Issac Coggs, and Walton Bryan Stewart are the first Black elected officials to serve together in the legislature.
- 1959** Assemblyman Isaac Coggs is the first Black legislator to chair a legislative committee.
- 1965** Representative Lloyd Barbee becomes the first Black member of the Joint Committee on Finance.
- 1973** Monroe Swan becomes the first Black state senator.
- 1977** Marcia Coggs is seated in the Wisconsin State Assembly, becoming the first Black woman to serve in the Wisconsin Legislature.
- 1981** Representative Marcia Coggs becomes the first Black woman to chair a legislative committee.
- 1984** Senator Gary George becomes the first Black legislator to cochair the Joint Committee on Finance.
- 1985** Representative Spencer Coggs is elected vice chair of the minority caucus in the assembly.
- 1991** Representative Robert L. Turner becomes the first Black member of the Wisconsin Legislature to represent a district located in Racine County.
- 1993** Gwen Moore becomes the first Black woman seated in the Wisconsin State Senate.
- 1996** Senator Gwen Moore is elected senate president pro tempore.
- 2003** Representative Robert L. Turner is chosen to chair the assembly's minority caucus.
- 2012** Senator Lena Taylor becomes the first Black woman to cochair the Joint Committee on Finance.
- 2019** At age 19, Representative Kalan Haywood is the youngest Black legislator to serve in the Wisconsin Assembly. Representative Shelia Stubbs becomes the first Black legislator to represent a Dane County district.
- 2021** Senator Julian Bradley becomes the first Black Republican to serve in the Wisconsin State Senate as well as the first Black legislator to represent Senate District 28.

Black members of the Wisconsin Legislature

The following tables compile the names of all members of the Wisconsin Legislature who have identified themselves or been identified in the press as African American or Black. Tables 1 and 2 list all Black members alphabetically by house and indicate their party, district, occupational background, and sessions of service. Table 3 lists the members serving in each session.

Table 1. Alphabetical list of Black senators, 1981–2023

Name	Party	District	Occupations	Sessions served
Bradley, Julian	Rep.	28	Manager for telecommunications and insurance companies	2021, 23
Coggs, G. Spencer*	Dem.	6	Health officer, postal worker, industrial printer	2003, 05, 07, 09, 11
George, Gary R.	Dem.	6	Attorney	1981, 83, 85, 87, 89, 91, 93, 95, 97, 99, 2001, 03
Harris Dodd, Nikiya	Dem.	6	Former nonprofit fundraiser, precollege coordinator, preschool teacher	2013, 15
Johnson, LaTonya*	Dem.	6	Former family childcare provider/owner, insurance agent, financial employment planner	2017, 19, 21, 23
Moore, Gwen*	Dem.	4	Former housing officer with Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority, development specialist with Milwaukee City Development, program and planning analyst with Wisconsin Departments of Employment Relations and Health and Social Services	1993, 95, 97, 99, 2001, 03
Swan, Monroe	Dem.	6	Employment program director, former material expediter	1973, 75, 77, 79
Taylor, Lena C.*	Dem.	4	Attorney	2005, 07, 09, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23

* Served in both houses.

Table 2. Alphabetical list of Black representatives, 1907–2023

Name	Party	District	Occupations	Sessions served
Baldeh, Sambah	Dem.	48	Information technology project manager, small business owner	2021, 23
Barbee, Lloyd A.	Dem.	Milwaukee 6, Milwaukee 18	Attorney	1965, 67, 69, 71, 73, 75

Table 2. Alphabetical list of Black representatives, 1907–2023, continued

Name	Party	District	Occupations	Sessions served
Barnes, Mandela	Dem.	11	Community organizer	2013, 15
Bowen, David	Dem.	10	Legislator, former Milwaukee County Board supervisor	2015, 17, 19, 21
Brown Jr., Cecil B.	Dem.	Milwaukee 13	Tax consultant, public relations counselor, insurance agent	1955
Coggs, Elizabeth M.	Dem.	10	Legislator	2011
Coggs, G. Spencer*	Dem.	16, 17	City of Milwaukee health officer	1983, 85, 87, 89, 91, 93, 95, 97, 99, 2001, 03
Coggs, Isaac N.	Dem.	Milwaukee 6	Accountant	1953, 55, 57, 59, 61, 63
Coggs, Marcia P.	Dem.	18, 12, 18	Legislator	1977, 79, 81, 83, 85, 87, 89, 91
Crowley, David	Dem.	17	Legislative and county board supervisor aide	2017, 19
Drake, Dora	Dem.	11	Response training facilitator for criminal justice professionals, sales representative	2021, 23
Fields, Jason	Dem.	11	CEO of investment firm, certified financial education instructor; former stockbroker, investment banker, business owner	2005, 07, 09, 11, 17, 19
Grigsby, Tamara	Dem.	18	Social worker	2005, 07, 09, 11
Haywood, Kalan	Dem.	16	Student, nonprofit consultant	2019, 21, 23
Johnson, LaTonya*	Dem.	17	Legislator, former family childcare provider/owner	2013, 15
Lathan, Raymond Lee	Dem.	Milwaukee 13	Minister	1963
Madison, Darrin	Dem.	10	Community organizer, youth justice coordinator, eco-neighborhood specialist	2023
Moore, Gwen*	Dem.	7	Housing and economic development analyst	1989, 91
Moore Omokunde, Supreme	Dem.	17	Milwaukee County Board supervisor	2021, 23
Morris, Johnnie (Morris-Tatum)	Dem.	11	Executive director, community organization	1993, 95, 97, 99, 2001, 03
Myers, LaKeshia	Dem.	12	Educator, small business owner, former subcommittee clerk, U.S. House of Representatives; former legislative aide, Wisconsin State Senate	2019, 21, 23
Palmer, Lucian H.	Rep.	Milwaukee 6	Steward	1907
Riley, Antonio R.	Dem.	18	Staff assistant to mayor of Milwaukee	1993, 95, 97, 99, 2001, 03
Simmons, Le Roy J.	Dem.	Milwaukee 6	Salesman	1945, 47, 49, 51

Table 2. Alphabetical list of Black representatives, 1907–2023, continued

Name	Party	District	Occupations	Sessions served
Stewart, Walton Bryan	Dem.	Milwaukee 2	Law clerk, building contractor, tavern and restaurant operator	1955
Stubbs, Shelia	Dem.	77	Dane County supervisor, probation and parole officer	2019, 21, 23
Taylor, Lena C. *	Dem.	18	Attorney	2003
Toles, Barbara	Dem.	17	Community outreach coordinator	2003, 05, 07, 09, 11
Turner, Robert L.	Dem.	61	City council member, state elections board chair	1991, 93, 95, 97, 99, 2001, 03, 05, 07, 09, 11
Ward Jr., Walter L.	Dem.	17	Counselor	1973, 75, 77, 79
Williams, Annette Polly	Dem.	17, 11, 17, 10	Mental health assistant	1981, 83, 85, 87, 89, 91, 93, 95, 97, 99, 2001, 03, 05, 07, 09
Young, Leon D.	Dem.	16	Police officer and police aide	1993, 95, 97, 99, 2001, 03, 05, 07, 09, 11, 13, 15, 17

* Served in both houses.

Table 3. List of Black legislators by session

Session	Total	Names
1907	1	Assemblyman Palmer
1909–43	0	—
1945–51	1	Assemblyman Simmons
1953	1	Assemblyman I. Coggs
1955	3	Assemblymen Brown, I. Coggs, and Stewart
1957–61	1	Assemblyman I. Coggs
1963	2	Assemblymen I. Coggs and Lathan
1965–71	1	Assemblyman Barbee
1973–75	3	Senator Swan Representatives Barbee and Ward
1977–79	3	Senator Swan Representatives M. Coggs and Ward
1981	3	Senator George Representatives M. Coggs and Williams
1983–87	4	Senator George Representatives M. Coggs, G. S. Coggs, and Williams

Table 3. List of Black legislators by session, continued

Session	Total	Names
1989	5	Senator George Representatives M. Coggs, G. S. Coggs, Moore, and Williams
1991	6	Senator George Representatives M. Coggs, G. S. Coggs, Moore, Turner, and Williams
1993–2001	8	Senators George and Moore Representatives G. S. Coggs, Morris, Riley, Turner, Williams, and Young
2003	11	Senators G. S. Coggs,* George,* and Moore Representatives G. S. Coggs,† Morris, Riley,‡ Taylor,‡ Toles,† Turner, Williams, and Young
2005–09	8	Senators G. S. Coggs and Taylor Representatives Fields, Grigsby, Toles, Turner, Williams, and Young
2011	8	Senators G. S. Coggs and Taylor Representatives E. Coggs, Fields, Grigsby, Toles, Turner, and Young
2013	5	Senators Harris Dodd and Taylor Representatives Barnes, Johnson, and Young
2015	6	Senators Harris Dodd and Taylor Representatives Barnes, Bowen, Johnson, and Young
2017	6	Senators Johnson and Taylor Representatives Bowen, Crowley, Fields, and Young
2019	8	Senators Johnson and Taylor Representatives Bowen, Crowley, Fields, Haywood, Myers, and Stubbs
2021	10	Senators Bradley, Johnson, and Taylor Representatives Baldeh, Bowen, Drake, Haywood, Moore Omokunde, Myers, and Stubbs
2023	10	Senators Bradley, Johnson, and Taylor Representatives Baldeh, Drake, Haywood, Madison, Moore Omokunde, Myers, and Stubbs

* Served consecutively representing the Sixth Senate District.

† Served consecutively representing the Seventeenth Assembly District.

‡ Served consecutively representing the Eighteenth Assembly District.