**Lawmakers filed for more taxpayer-paid expenses in 2023 than 2021**

By WisPolitics.com

Lawmakers spent more time in the Capitol than they did two years ago as per diems were up in 2023 compared to the last time they hammered out a budget, according to records from the Senate and Assembly chief clerks' offices.

In all, lawmakers claimed more than $1.4 million in 2023 for 12,890 days. By comparison, they claimed less than $1.2 million in 2021 for 11,468 days as both numbers took a dip from 2019 with the Capitol still getting back to its normal rhythm after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The two chambers have different rules for the expense reimbursements, which are meant to cover costs such as lodging and meals while lawmakers are in Madison for legislative business. The Assembly allows members to claim up to 153 days in the first year of a biennium with a rate of $155.70 for overnight trips and $77.85 for coming into the Capitol for just the day. Dane County legislators can only claim the day trip rate. The Senate, meanwhile, doesn’t cap the number of days
lawmakers can claim. And lawmakers in both chambers also claim mileage for their trips to the Capitol separately from their per diem payments, which are in addition to their salaries of $57,408.

In the Senate, LaTonya Johnson, D-Milwaukee and a member of the Joint Finance Committee, claimed the most at $19,320. That was followed by Madison Dem Melissa Agard, who spent most of the year as the minority leader, at $17,360, followed by Majority Leader Devin LeMahieu, R-Oostburg at $17,080. Meanwhile, Sen. Rob Hutton, R-Brookfield, claimed the least at $4,715, while Senate President Chris Kapenga, R-Delafield, had the second lowest at $5,040. Overall, the chamber’s members claimed $405,489.

State reps, meanwhile, claimed just over $1 million. Freshmen took two of the three top slots – Rep. Peter Schmidt, R-Bonduel, claimed the most at $19,211, while Rep. Karen Hurd, R-Fall Creek, came in at No. 3 with $17,888. In between was sophomore Rep. Calvin Callahan, R-Tomahawk, at $18,525.

Schmidt’s office told WisPolitics the lawmaker makes a point to be in the Capitol each day leadership sets aside as a potential floor day and noted he lives in the northern part of the state about 2.5 hours from Madison.

Meanwhile, Hurd told WisPolitics she serves on six committees on top of chairing the Speaker’s Task Force on Childhood Obesity and has worked on several bills during her first year in the Assembly, some of which were signed by Gov. Tony Evers. “It’s called hard work,” she said.

Former GOP Rep. Dan Knodl, who won a spring special election for a Senate seat, claimed the least at $1,401, while Rep. Jimmy Anderson, D-Fitchburg, was next lowest at $1,946.

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