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# Wisconsin Briefs

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## PROFILE OF THE 2005 WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

### January 3, 2005

This brief profiles the members of the 2005 Wisconsin Legislature at the time of their inauguration on January 3, 2005. It includes information about party affiliation, marital status, legislative experience, occupation, gender, age, educational background, and military service.

A summary table that offers comparable data for the last six legislatures is included. Similar information, dating back to the 1943 Legislature, has appeared in the *Wisconsin Blue Book* since 1956.

#### THE SENATE PROFILE

The senate has 33 members. When the 2005 Legislature convened on January 3, 2005, there were 19 Republicans and 14 Democrats. Of the total, eight senators were women and two were African-American. Twenty-three senators were married.

**Legislative Experience.** Of the 16 seats up for election in 2004, 11 members from the 2003 Senate were reelected, one incumbent senator was defeated, and four ran for open seats. Seventeen members were holdover senators in the middle of their terms.

A total of 23 senators have previous service in the assembly. In terms of combined prior service in both the senate and the assembly, 9 senators have served in 10 or more biennial sessions; 12 served in 5-9 sessions; and the remaining 12 have served in fewer than 5 sessions. Most notable is Senator Fred Risser (D-26th District), who has the distinction of the longest legislative tenure in Wisconsin state history with 21 prior sessions in the senate and three in the assembly for a total of 48 years of service.

Four senators had previous experience in a legislative staff position. One served on the staff of a member of Congress and the other three

worked for either a state senator or representative.

**Local Government Experience.** Fourteen senators have had experience in local government as elected public officials. Four served as county board supervisors and, of these, one was also an alderman. Three additional senators served on city councils, two were on school boards, four were on a town board, and one was both a town official and a school board member.

**Age.** As of January 3, 2005, the average age of a senator was 52 with an age range from 34 to 77 years. The age ranges for the senators were: 4 senators in the 30-39 range; 9 in the 40-49 range; 12 in the 50-59 range; and 8 senators over 60 years of age.

**Occupation.** Eleven senators list themselves as full-time legislators. One of these also lists the additional occupation of journeyman bricklayer. Two senators are currently practicing attorneys. Other current occupations include newspaper publisher, home builder, printer, farm management, raising exotic animals, owner of a baseball team, and nursing. One senator is a former fire chief.

**Education.** Of the 29 senators who continued their formal education beyond high school, 26 have academic degrees and three attended either a technical school or a college or university. Three senators hold law degrees, five have master's degrees, and 17 others hold bachelor's degrees. One has an associate degree.

**Military Service.** Nine senators have served in the nation's armed forces: one in each of the four major branches of service, three in the Army Reserve, one in the Marine Corps Reserve, and one in the Wisconsin Air National Guard. One senator is a veteran of World War II and three are Vietnam War veterans.

## THE ASSEMBLY PROFILE

There are 99 representatives to the assembly. When the 2005 Legislature convened on January 3, 2005, there were 60 Republicans and 39 Democrats. Twenty-six members were women, a decrease of one from the 2003 session. Six representatives were African-American and one was Hispanic. Seventy representatives were married.

**Legislative Experience.** Eighty representatives were reelected in 2004, while 18 are serving their first term in the assembly. One new representative, Frederick P. Kessler (D-12th District), returns to the assembly after an absence of 32 years. Three incumbents were defeated in 2004: two in the general election and one in the primary. The other 16 new members did not face an incumbent. The longest-serving representative is Representative Marlin Schneider (D-72nd District), who has served in 17 prior sessions, for a total of 34 years. With the beginning of the 2005 session, Representative Schneider became the longest-serving representative in the history of the assembly. Other representatives with 10 or more prior sessions include one with 13, one with 12, two with 11, and three with 10. Other returning representatives include 24 with 5-9 sessions, 6 with 4 sessions, 15 with 3 sessions, 10 with 2 sessions, and 17 with one session.

Sixteen representatives have had previous experience in a legislative staff position. Three worked for a member of the U.S. Congress, 13 worked in the state legislature, and two worked for a member of Congress and a legislator.

**Local Government Experience.** Of the 41 representatives who have had experience in local elected office, five held office at both the county and municipal level, 13 others held county office, and an additional 23 had municipal service.

Eighteen representatives have served as county board supervisors, 14 as city council members, five as town board members, and three others were village trustees. Seven have served as school board members. Three were city mayors.

**Age.** As of January 3, 2005, the average age of a representative was 50 with an age range from 28 to 77 years. The age ranges for the representatives were: 3 in the 20-29 range; 15 in the 30-39 range; 30 in the 40-49 range; 37 in the 50-59 range; 9 in the 60-69 range; and 5 over 70 years of age.

**Occupation.** Thirty-nine representatives list themselves as full-time legislators (including four members who list additional occupations as attorney, veterinarian, physician, and supper-club owner). Nine representatives are currently farmers. Eleven representatives are currently practicing attorneys. Among the other representatives, thirteen list themselves as small business owners. Four are in the restaurant business. Two are physicians. Other current occupations include: realtor or real estate broker; farm manager; civil engineer; labor arbitrator; and registered nurse. Former occupations listed include 15 teachers, four farmers, and two restaurant owners.

**Education.** Of the 90 representatives who have continued their formal education beyond high school, 70 hold academic degrees, and 20 attended a college or university or an agricultural, business, technical, or trade school after high school graduation. Listed by their highest degree, two have an M.D. degree and 11 hold law degrees. One is a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine. Twenty-one others hold master's degrees. An additional 33 have bachelor's degrees. Two hold an associate degree.

**Military Service.** Nineteen representatives have served in the armed forces. Six served in the Army, three in the Air Force, and five in the Navy. Six were members of the Wisconsin National Guard, the Wisconsin Air National Guard, or the U.S. Army Reserve. Two of the Navy veterans later served in the U.S. Naval Reserve. One representative is a veteran of World War II and 11 are Vietnam War veterans. One representative served in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, and one in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

PERSONAL DATA ON WISCONSIN LEGISLATORS, 1995 – 2005 SESSIONS

	1995		1997		1999		2001		2003		2005	
	Sen.	Rep.	Sen.	Rep.	Sen.	Rep.	Sen.	Rep.	Sen.	Rep.	Sen.	Rep.
Party Affiliation												
Democrat	16	48	17	47	17	44	18	43	15	41	14	39
Republican	17	51	16	52	16	55	15	56	18	58	19	60
Number with previous legislative service												
In senate	32	0	32	0	30	0	30	0	27	0	28	0
In assembly	21	87	23	89	23	78	24	89	22	84	23	81
Highest number of prior sessions in same house	16	12	17	13	18	14	19	15	20	16	21	17
Occupations												
Full-time legislator	12	40	14	38	14	38	15	40	13	39	11	39
Attorney	6	10	6	11	5	10	5	10	3	8	2	11
Farmer	1	14	0	15	1	12	1	13	3	9	3	9
Other	14	35	13	35	13	39	12	36	14	43	17	41
Education												
High school only	2	15	2	15	2	12	2	13	4	12	4	9
Beyond high school	31	84	31	84	31	87	31	86	29	87	29	90
Bachelor's or associate degree	27	66	28	66	26	67	28	67	25	67	26	70
Advanced degree	8	26	9	30	8	29	8	31	7	32	8	34
Number with experience on local government body												
County board	2	22	3	21	4	19	4	18	4	19	4	18
Municipal board	8	24	6	29	6	31	5	36	8	35	10	28
Age												
Oldest	67	69	69	71	71	69	73	71	75	75	77	77
Youngest	31	26	33	28	35	27	37	26	33	27	34	28
Average	48	45	48	46	50	46	52	47	51	49	52	50
Veterans												
Veterans	6	14	5	14	4	14	4	15	4	13	4	14
Marital status												
Single	5	28	4	25	6	23	5	23	5	17	10	25
Married	28	70	29	73	27	74	28	76	28	80	23	70
Widowed	0	1	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	4
Number of women												
Number of women	8	24	9	22	11	19	11	22	8	27	8	26

Sen. - Senators; Rep. - Representatives.

Note: Most data are recorded as of the date on which the legislature first convened; ages are determined as of January 1.