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# Wisconsin Briefs

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## PROFILE OF THE 2007 WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

### January 3, 2007

This brief profiles the members of the 2007 Wisconsin Legislature at the time of their inauguration on January 3, 2007. 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, including 18 Democrats and 15 Republicans. Of the total, eight senators are women and two are African-American (including one woman). Twenty-five senators are married.

**Legislative Experience.** Of the 17 seats up for election in 2006, 13 members from the 2005 Senate were reelected, three incumbent senators were defeated, and one was elected from an open seat. Sixteen 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, 10 senators have served in 10 or more biennial sessions; 12 served in 5-9 sessions; and the remaining 11 have served in fewer than 5 sessions. Most notable is Senator Fred Risser (D-26th District), currently the longest-serving legislator in the United States. Risser also has the distinction of the longest legislative tenure in Wisconsin state history, with 22 prior sessions in the senate and three in the assembly for a total of 50 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.** Fifteen 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. Five additional senators served on city councils, two were on school boards, and four were on a town board.

**Age.** As of January 3, 2007, the average age of a senator was 54, with an age range from 36 to 79 years. The age ranges for the senators were: four senators in the 30-39 range, seven in the 40-49 range, 12 in the 50-59 range, and 10 senators over 60 years of age.

**Occupation.** Twelve senators list themselves as full-time legislators. One of these also lists the additional occupation of journeyman bricklayer. Three senators are currently practicing attorneys. Other current occupations include newspaper publisher, farm management, raising exotic animals, owner of a baseball team, and nursing.

**Education.** Of the 31 senators who continued their formal education beyond high school, 28 have academic degrees and three attended either a technical school or a college or university. Four senators hold law degrees, six have master's degrees, and 18 others hold bachelor's degrees. One has a Ph.D.

**Military Service.** Eight senators have served in the nation's armed forces: one in the Army, one in the Navy, three in the Army Reserve, one in the Naval 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 one is a Vietnam veteran.

## THE ASSEMBLY PROFILE

There are 99 representatives to the assembly, including 52 Republicans and 47 Democrats. Twenty-two members are women, a decrease of four from the 2005 session. Six representatives are African-American (including three women), and one is Hispanic. Sixty-nine representatives are married.

**Legislative Experience.** Eighty-two representatives were reelected in 2006, while 17 are serving their first term in the assembly. Six incumbents were defeated in 2006, all in the general election. The other 11 new members did not face an incumbent. The longest-serving representative is Representative Marlin Schneider (D-72nd District), who has served in 18 prior sessions, for a total of 36 years. Representative Schneider is the longest-serving representative in the history of the assembly. Other representatives with 10 or more prior sessions include one with 14, one with 13, two with 12, three with 11, and two with 10. Other returning representatives include 20 with 5-9 sessions, 13 with 4 sessions, seven with 3 sessions, 14 with 2 sessions, and 18 with one session.

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

**Local Government Experience.** Of the 44 representatives who have had experience in local elected office, four held office at both the county and municipal level, 17 others held county office, and an additional 28 had municipal service.

Seventeen representatives have served as county board supervisors, 12 as city council members, seven as town board members, and three others were village trustees. Five have served as school board members. Three have served as city mayors. One is a former county sheriff, and one is a former circuit court judge. One is a current county executive.

**Age.** As of January 3, 2007, the average age of a representative was 50, with an age range from 28 to 79 years. The age ranges for the representatives were: one in the 20-29 range, 21 in the 30-39 range, 22 in the 40-49 range, 37 in the 50-59 range, 13 in the 60-69 range, and five over 70 years of age.

**Occupation.** Thirty-eight representatives list themselves as full-time legislators (including three members who list additional occupations as attorney, veterinarian, and physician). Five representatives are currently farmers, and 11 are currently practicing attorneys. Among the other representatives, 18 list themselves as business owners. Other current occupations include realtor or real estate broker, civil engineer, labor arbitrator, assembly line operator, physician, and registered nurse. Former occupations listed include 13 teachers, six farmers, and two restaurant owners.

**Education.** Of the 92 representatives who have continued their formal education beyond high school, 69 hold academic degrees and 23 attended a college, university, or agricultural, business, technical, or trade school after high school graduation. Listed by their highest degree, one has a Ph.D., two have an M.D., and 13 hold law degrees. One is a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine. Twenty hold master's degrees, 30 have bachelor's degrees, and two hold an associate degree.

**Military Service.** Twenty-one representatives have served in the armed forces. Eight served in the Army, three in the Air Force, and five in the Navy. Five were members of the Wisconsin National Guard, the Wisconsin Air National Guard, or the U.S. Army Reserve. Three 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 veterans. Two representatives served in the 1990-1991 Persian Gulf War, and two have served in the current Iraq War.

PERSONAL DATA ON WISCONSIN LEGISLATORS, 1997 – 2007 SESSIONS

	1997		1999		2001		2003		2005		2007	
	Sen.	Rep.	Sen.	Rep.	Sen.	Rep.	Sen.	Rep.	Sen.	Rep.	Sen.	Rep.
Party Affiliation												
Democrat	17	47	17	44	18	43	15	41	14	39	18	47
Republican	16	52	16	55	15	56	18	58	19	60	15	52
Number with previous legislative service												
In senate	32	0	30	0	30	0	27	0	28	0	29	0
In assembly	23	89	23	78	24	89	22	84	23	81	23	82
Highest number of prior sessions in same house	17	13	18	14	19	15	20	16	21	17	22	18
Occupations												
Full-time legislator	14	38	14	38	15	40	13	39	11	39	12	38
Attorney	6	11	5	10	5	10	3	8	2	11	3	11
Farmer	0	15	1	12	1	13	3	9	3	9	3	5
Other	13	35	13	39	12	36	14	43	17	40	15	45
Education												
High school only	2	15	2	12	2	13	4	12	4	9	2	7
Beyond high school	31	84	31	87	31	86	29	87	29	90	31	92
Bachelor's or associate degree	28	66	26	67	28	67	25	67	26	70	28	69
Advanced degree	9	30	8	29	8	31	7	32	8	34	10	37
Number with experience on local government body												
County board	3	21	4	19	4	18	4	19	4	18	4	17
Municipal board	6	29	6	31	5	36	8	35	10	28	12	25
Age												
Oldest	69	71	71	69	73	71	75	75	77	77	79	79
Youngest	33	28	35	27	37	26	33	27	34	28	36	28
Average	48	46	50	46	52	47	51	49	52	50	54	50
Veterans												
Veterans	5	14	4	14	4	15	4	13	4	13	2	16
Marital status												
Single	4	25	6	23	5	23	5	17	10	25	8	25
Married	29	73	27	74	28	76	28	80	23	70	25	69
Widowed	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	4	0	5
Number of women												
Number of women	9	22	11	19	11	22	8	27	8	26	8	22

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.