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Rep. Steffen Introduces Bill to Eliminate HealthCare Golden Parachute for Legislators

Madison- Today, State Representative David Steffen (R-Howard) introduced legislation that would eliminate the ability for state legislators to accrue unused sick leave which can be used to pay for health insurance premiums upon retirement, saving taxpayers millions of dollars over the long-term.

Currently, Wisconsin legislators earn 10.5 sick leave days per year. Allowing unused sick leave to be accumulated and converted to sick leave credits has created a little-known post-retirement perk that boasts a big price tag. As of March 31, 2015 the estimated value of these sick leave credits for all 132 legislators was \$2,411,600 and the annual cost to the state for funding this program is \$80,700.

“Removing this costly perk has been one of my top priorities since I took office in the Legislature. The idea that sick leave has become almost entirely a post-retirement benefit is demonstrated in how seldom sick leave is actually used and how valuable these credits are upon retirement,” said Rep. Steffen.

The legislation Rep. Steffen has proposed eliminates this benefit by providing that state legislators cannot accrue new sick leave beyond their current term. This means that credits already earned by legislators would still be honored.

“At the end of 2014, the credit balance available to retired legislators to put towards their healthcare premiums was roughly \$3.5 million. If retiree’s choose to utilize this benefit, the state is on the hook for this balance, all at the cost of our hardworking taxpayers. This is an unnecessary political perk that must be addressed,” commented Rep. Steffen.

The bill is currently circulating to gain co-sponsorship support.

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