



Wisconsin Briefs

from the Legislative
Reference Bureau

Brief 99-1

January 1999

PROFILE OF THE 1999 WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE As of January 4, 1999

This brief profiles the members of the 1999 Wisconsin Legislature, including information about their party affiliation, marital status, legislative experience, occupation, gender, age, educational background, and military service. It also includes a table that provides comparable data for the last six legislatures. Similar information, beginning with the 1943 Legislature, has appeared in the *Wisconsin Blue Book* since 1956.

THE SENATE PROFILE

The senate has 33 members. When the 1999 Legislature convened on January 4, 1999, there were 17 Democrats and 16 Republicans. Eleven senators were women (an increase from 9 in the 1997 Legislature) and two were African-American. Twenty-seven senators were married.

Legislative Experience. Of the 17 seats up for election in 1998, 14 members of the 1999 Senate were reelected and three ran for open seats and were elected to their first senate session. Sixteen members were holdover senators in the middle of their terms. A total of 23 senators have previous service in the assembly, tying the record of the 1997 Legislature.

Senate President Fred Risser (D - 26th District) has the longest record of legislative service in Wisconsin state history. He has 18 prior sessions in the senate and three in the assembly, for a total of 42 years. Three other senators have served in 10 or more prior legislative sessions (including service in both the senate and assembly); an additional 20 served in 5-9 prior sessions and the remaining 9 have served in less than 5.

Six senators had previous experience in a legislative staff position. One served as a staff member to a U.S. Congressman and the other five worked for either a state senator or representative.

Local Government Experience. Nine senators have had experience in local government as elected public officials. Of these, four served as county board supervisors and one was also a municipal officer. Two additional senators served on city councils, two as village president or trustee, and one was both a town official and a school board member.

Age. As of January 1, 1999, the average age of a senator was 50 with an age range from 35 to 71 years. The age ranges for the senators were: 4 senators in the 30-39 range, 13 in the 40-49 range; 8 in the 50-59 range; and 8 senators over 60 years of age.

Occupation. The largest current occupation category consists of 14 senators who list themselves as full-time legislators. One of these also lists the additional occupation of journeyman bricklayer. Five senators are currently practicing attorneys, including one who is also a realtor and owner of a small business. Other current occupations include newspaper pub-

lishing, real estate sales, farm management, raising exotic animals, investment advising and timber production/tree farming, and land surveying, outdoor column writing, and nursing. Five senators list teaching as a former occupation. One senator is a retired naval officer.

Education. Of the 31 senators who continued their formal education beyond high school, 26 have academic degrees. Five senators hold law degrees, three have master's degrees, and 18 others hold bachelor's degrees. Twenty-four senators attended schools within the University of Wisconsin System.

Military Service. Eight senators have served in the nation's armed forces: two in the Navy, two in the Army, one in the Marine Corps and three in the Army Reserve. 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 1999 Legislature convened on January 4, 1999, there were 55 Republicans and 44 Democrats. Nineteen members were women, a drop from 22 in the 1997 session. Six representatives were African-American, and the 1999 Legislature includes its first Hispanic representative. Seventy-four representatives were married.

Legislative Experience. Seventy-eight representatives were reelected in 1998, while 21 are serving their first term in the assembly. (All but two of the 21 ran for open seats.) The longest-serving representative is Representative Marlin Schneider (D - 72nd District), who has served in 14 prior sessions, for a total of 28 years. Representatives with 10 or more prior sessions include one with 13 prior sessions, 2 with 12 sessions, and one with 10 sessions. Service of the other returning representatives includes 25 with 5-9 sessions, 10 with 4 sessions, 16 with 3 sessions, 11 with 2 sessions, and 11 with one session.

Fifteen representatives have had previous experience in a legislative staff position. Thirteen worked in the state legislature and two worked for a member of the U.S. Congress.

Local Government Experience. Of the 50 representatives who have had experience in local elected office, 6 held office at both the county and municipal level, 13 others held county office, and an additional 25 had municipal service.

Nineteen representatives have served as county board supervisors, 15 as city council members, 10 as town board members, and 5 were village trustees. Seven have served as school board members. One representative was a city mayor. Several representatives have served in miscellaneous appointive governmental positions.

Age. As of January 1, 1999, the average age of a representative was 46 with an age range from 27 to 69 years. The age ranges for the representatives were: 4 representatives in the 20-29 range; 28 in the 30-39 range; 36 in the 40-49 range; 19 in the 50-59 range; and 12 representatives 60-69 years of age.

Occupation. The largest current occupation category consists of 38 representatives who list themselves as full-time legislator (including four members who list additional occupations as gift shop store owner, attorney, farmer and physician). Twelve additional representatives are currently farmers, four of them dairy farmers. Seven representatives are currently practicing attorneys and three describe themselves as nonpracticing attorneys. Among the other representatives, seven list themselves as small business owners and three as public affairs execu-

tive or consultant. Other current occupations include: real estate salesman; self-employed printer; farm manager; occupational therapist; plumbing contractor; assistant in a family-run restaurant; financial specialist/budget analyst; insurance agent/broker; feed, seed and fertilizer dealer; part-time video consultant; and distance learning specialist. Former occupations listed include 11 teachers, two farmers and two building contractors. One representative is a retired physician.

Education. Of the 87 representatives who have continued their formal education beyond high school, 67 hold academic degrees. Listed by their highest degree, two have M.D. degrees (one also holds a separate master's degree) and 10 hold law degrees (including two with separate master's degrees). Seventeen others hold master's degrees. An additional 37 have bachelor's degrees. One holds an associate degree, and 10 others attended agricultural, business, technical or trade schools after high school graduation. Sixty-one representatives attended schools in the University of Wisconsin System.

Military Service. Eighteen representatives have served in the armed forces. Six served in the Army, four in the Air Force, two in the Navy and one in the Marine Corps. Five representatives have served in the Wisconsin National Guard, the Wisconsin Air National Guard or the U.S. Army Reserve. Four representatives are veterans of the Korean Conflict and nine are Vietnam War veterans. One representative served in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

PERSONAL DATA ON WISCONSIN LEGISLATORS, 1989 – 1999 SESSIONS

	1989		1991		1993*		1995		1997		1999	
	Sen.	Rep.	Sen.	Rep.	Sen.	Rep.	Sen.	Rep.	Sen.	Rep.	Sen.	Rep.
Party Affiliation												
Democrat	20	56	19	58	15	52	16	48	17	47	17	44
Republican	13	43	14	41	15	47	17	51	16	52	16	55
Number with previous legislative service												
In senate	32	0	29	0	26	0	32	0	32	0	30	0
In assembly	19	86	20	85	19	76	21	87	23	89	23	78
Highest number of prior sessions in same house ..	13	15	14	16	15	11	16	12	17	13	18	14
Occupations												
Full-time legislator	9	44	11	48	13	50	12	40	14	38	14	38
Attorney	10	13	9	10	7	9	6	10	6	11	5	10
Farmer	3	11	3	13	3	13	1	14	0	15	1	12
Other	11	31	10	28	7	27	14	35	13	35	13	39
Education												
High school only	3	9	3	11	2	13	2	15	2	15	2	12
Beyond high school	30	90	30	88	28	86	31	84	31	84	31	87
Bachelor's or associate degree	26	75	25	73	23	68	27	66	28	66	26	67
Advanced degree	13	31	11	29	9	27	8	26	9	30	8	29
Number with experience on local government body												
County board	3	16	3	15	2	17	2	22	3	21	4	19
Municipal board	6	16	4	19	4	22	8	24	6	29	6	31
Age												
Oldest	65	76	66	78	65	70	67	69	69	71	71	69
Youngest	30	25	32	27	34	24	31	26	33	28	35	27
Average	45	44	47	45	47	46	48	45	48	46	50	46
Veterans	8	15	6	15	4	16	6	14	5	14	4	14
Marital status												
Single	4	30	5	24	3	27	5	28	4	25	6	23
Married	28	68	28	73	27	71	28	70	29	73	27	74
Widowed	1	1	0	2	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	2
Number of women	4	31	5	26	7	29	8	24	9	22	11	19

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.

*In 1993 there were three vacancies when the senate began its session because three incumbent senators resigned.

Prepared by Legislative Reference Bureau, January 1999.