



Co-chair

STATE SENATOR
ERIC WIMBERGER

JOINT LEGISLATIVE AUDIT COMMITTEE

Co-chair

STATE REPRESENTATIVE
ROBERT WITTKKE

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Contact:
Senator Eric Wimberger – (608) 266-5670
Representative Robert Wittke – (608) 266-9163

New Audits Uncover DEI Efforts Across State Agencies, UW

*Millions in Salary Costs, Thousands of Staff Hours Spent on DEI
Committees and Training with Few Measurable Results*

MADISON – Senator Eric Wimberger (R-Oconto) and Representative Robert Wittke (R-Caledonia) issued the following statements after the release of Reports [25-05](#) and [25-06](#), new state audits investigating “diversity, equity, and inclusion” initiatives in Wisconsin’s state government and the Universities of Wisconsin:

*“Today’s new audit shows us the extent to which DEI grifters profiteer off Wisconsin taxpayers,” Senator Wimberger stated. **“Wisconsin should not tolerate, much less propagate, race-based discrimination masquerading as equality in its halls of government. This report shows that taxpayers spent millions of dollars on DEI with very little to show for it. Thanks to these findings, we can now more clearly identify wasteful and abusive spending by our agencies, and end it for good.”***

Senator Wimberger continued, *“Governor Evers abandoned a MLK Jr.-inspired pursuit of a colorblind society and replaced it with DEI plans requiring a hyper focus on immutable characteristics. Executive Order 59 takes away individuality and imposes scorekeeping among groups Wisconsinites didn’t choose to join. Positioning bureaucrats as arbiters among imposed intersectional group interests is wrong, ineffective, and shockingly wasteful, allowing grifters to sell propaganda at a high price.”*

*“Once again, the audit report completed by the Legislative Audit Bureau shows the **repeated and ongoing neglect by the Department of Administration** to write, review, and monitor any, and all basic requirements of workforce assignments,” Representative Wittke said. **“It is striking to me that with each audit report we see the same recommendations come forth: ‘improve process for...; approve plans...; annually review training data; follow up with staff who have not completed...; require all agencies to submit documentation.’ Taxpayers are spending vast amounts of money on programs that barely get started or are rarely completed. The ‘action steps’ by agencies brought forward in this report are incomplete, and no one at the top seems to mind at all. We will continue to dig into the findings, and look to hold agencies and the UW System accountable to resolve the issues that continue to appear in these audit findings.”***

The Joint Legislative Audit Committee approved the audits in May 2024. The nonpartisan Legislative Audit Bureau analyzed the “diversity” initiatives of 24 state government agencies in compliance with [Governor Evers’ Executive Order 59](#), as well as 14 institutions across the University of Wisconsin system.

SENATOR WIMBERGER
P.O. Box 7882 • Madison, WI 53707-7882
(608) 266-5670

REPRESENTATIVE WITTKKE
P.O. Box 8953 • Madison, WI 53708-8953
(608) 237-9163



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Findings from the reports include:

University of Wisconsin System

- In Fiscal Year 2023-24, **UW institutions spent \$40.2 million** on offices with job duties pertaining to DEI
- In Fiscal Year 2023-24, UW institutions had **170 positions related to related to diversity, equity and inclusion with \$12.5 million of estimated salary costs.**
- While the Universities of Wisconsin claim that these programs support the success of all students, **only 403 – roughly 32% – of their 1,263 planned DEI activities focused on students.**
- **No UW institution tracked how much it spent on DEI**, including UW Madison, who had to reassign their DEI Chancellor for misuse of funds.
- DEI increased administrative bloat, and **12 academic schools and colleges at UW-Madison** now employ administrators dedicated to DEI. Plans indicate these officials work in collaboration with the University's Chief Diversity Officer, [who was removed from his position due alleged financial mismanagement](#) found in an internal investigation triggered by this audit.

State Agencies

- In Fiscal Year 2023-24, 12 state agencies spent \$2.2 million on salary costs for 47 positions with duties related to diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Agencies required to develop equity and inclusion action plans **outlined 192 DEI-related actions they expected to complete** in fiscal year 2023-24, **but completed just 81** actions, or 42%.
- Just eight of the required state agencies could provide auditors with some measure of cost information for completing these actions, totaling \$444,300.
- Two state agencies, **the Departments of Justice and Public Instruction, did not complete any of the DEI-related actions they had planned** for fiscal year 23-24.
 - Despite not completing any actions, the Department of Public Instruction spent more than \$59,000 in salary costs for staff to attend committee meetings for the purpose of implementing equity and inclusion action plans.
 - DPI has four such committees that met 78 times in FY23-24; an Equity and Inclusion Plan Workgroup that met 34 times, an Equity and Inclusion Leadership Committee that met 29 times, a Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee that met 11 times, and an Equity and Inclusion Plan Monitoring and Implementation Oversight Taskforce that met four times.
- In just one year, **agency staff spent 4,990 hours attending DEI committee meetings**, costing taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars in salary costs.
- In 2023, 23 state agencies spent an **estimated \$705,300 in salary costs for time spent attending DEI training.**
- In 2022, DOA found that 5 of the 21 agencies did not consistently comply with open meetings laws. However, the Legislative Audit Bureau found that **at least 6 agencies did not consistently comply with open meetings laws**, and 3 did not keep minutes, including six agencies that did not provide public notice of meetings.

The summaries and full reports can be viewed here for [Report 25-05](#) and [Report 25-06](#).

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