

WisGOP: Lt. Governor Barnes' taxpayer funded security costs skyrocket

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Barnes' Cost to the Taxpayers on Track to be 50x Greater than Former Lt. Gov. Kleefisch

[Madison, WI] – Yesterday, it was reported that security costs for Lt. Governor Mandela Barnes has skyrocketed compared to his Republican predecessor, former Lt. Governor Rebecca Kleefisch. In just the first two months of this year, the state patrol has racked up nearly 898 hours shuffling Barnes back and forth to official, personal and political events at a cost to the taxpayers of \$36,622. This puts the state on pace to spend nearly \$220,000 this year alone on Barnes' detail. That's more than 50x what was spent in 2018 to cover Kleefisch, who received just 95.5 hours of coverage throughout the entire year at a cost of \$4,370. Unlike Kleefisch, Lt. Governor Barnes is using state patrol to drive him to personal events such as church and going ice fishing.

Lt. Governor Barnes' misuse of taxpayer funds come at the same time that he and Governor Evers are proposing to increase taxes on [Wisconsin families by \\$1.3 billion](#) while also giving their cabinet secretaries [double-digit pay raises](#).

Wisconsinites do not want to pay higher taxes so that Lt. Governor Barnes can use the state patrol as his own personal chauffeur service.

Read the full write-up [here](#) or find excerpts below.

STATE PATROL HOURS TO PROTECT BARNES SKYROCKET COMPARED TO KLEEFISCH

WisPolitics

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On one day in February, Lt. Gov. Mandela Barnes drove to Kenosha, attended a

Black History Month event at a school and had lunch in Racine before heading back to Milwaukee, where he started the day. There, he had a call with the president of the Milwaukee Area Labor Council and by 5 p.m. was headed to dinner at the Mexican restaurant Cielito Lindo.

That day, taxpayers also picked up the tab for the State Patrol to put in 36 hours protecting him — the equivalent of three officers each working 12-hour shifts, according to a WisPolitics.com review.

It was part of a pattern for Barnes over just his first two months in office. The review found the state's Dignitary Protection Unit put in nine times as many hours providing him protection as it did his predecessor during her final full year on the job.

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Still, an aide to his predecessor Rebecca Kleefisch said the former Lt. gov didn't receive coverage for purely personal events, such as going to church, even at the height of the Act 10 protests.

That doesn't appear to be the case with Barnes, according to the review, which found DPU provided protection for Barnes on seven days over the two-month period in which he had no official public events listed on his calendar. Three of those were Sundays, when the only entry on Barnes' calendar was church. On another, a Saturday, the only entry was a 30-minute phone interview.

Still, DPU put in 18 hours protecting Barnes on one of those Sundays as he went to church with Gov. Tony Evers in Milwaukee and then drove to Madison six hours later, according to his official calendar.

State GOP spokesman Charles Nichols slammed Barnes' use of state protection, particularly considering Dems attacked Gov. Scott Walker during the 2018 campaign as out of touch for his use of state planes to travel across Wisconsin. He said WisPolitics.com's reporting suggested Barnes was using the DPU protection as a "perk."

"DPU coverage is meant for security purposes, not a luxury where Lt. Gov. Barnes can be driven around in the back of a black SUV," Nichols said.

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WisPolitics.com requested information from the DPU on the days and hours Barnes was provided protection after the lieutenant governor was spotted at what appeared to be purely personal events with State Patrol protection. That request, which spanned immediately after Barnes was elected through March 1, found the first day he received coverage from the DPU was Dec. 28.

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The cost for the nearly 898 hours the DPU logged accompanying Barnes to official,

personal and political events totaled \$36,662 — more than half of that for overtime — and puts him on pace for nearly \$220,000 in protection for the full year. Meanwhile, Kleefisch received protection on seven days over all of 2018, compared to the 47 that DPU officers accompanied Barnes between Dec. 28 and March 1. The total cost to protect Kleefisch last year was \$4,370 for 95.5 hours.

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Aide: Kleefisch didn't receive protection for personal events

Kleefisch initially didn't receive protection from the DPU after she took office, but that changed amid the protests over Act 10, said Daniel Suhr, her former chief of staff.

Even then, however, the standard was Kleefisch only received protection at official or political events where she was appearing as the lieutenant governor. That was particularly true for events that had been publicized ahead of time, Suhr said. But she didn't receive coverage for personal events.

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Records suggest Barnes often accompanied by more than one officer

The Department of Transportation, which oversees the State Patrol, refused to provide details on the number of officers that accompanied Barnes at various events, citing security concerns.

Still, it was clear from several entries that Barnes received protection from more than one officer on a given day.

The DPU reported 44 hours providing protection for Barnes Feb. 24, when he flew to Austin, Texas. There, he met with Mayor Steve Adler as well as officials from a pro-environmental group. He then went to the Texas Legislative Black Caucus luncheon before flying to Minneapolis.

The next day, he attended "Up North" events in Rice Lake, Barron and Cumberland. The following day, he was in Hayward and Springbrook, where he went ice fishing with Rep. Nick Milroy, D-Superior, before later returning to Madison.

Those three days accounted for 105 hours of protection from the DPU.

Similarly, Barnes racked up 94.5 hours over a three-day span in February while in Washington, D.C., for a political trip. On the day he flew back, he attended the 33rd annual Golden Shovel Awards presented by the National Association of Minority Contractors of Wisconsin and the state DOT in Pewaukee, did a reading event in Verona and attended a budget briefing before overnighing in Madison.

Asked for details on both out-of-state trips, Barnes' office said it had provided WisPolitics.com all the relevant records relating to its request for the lieutenant governor's official calendar. It also said personal events had been redacted from the calendar and it isn't in possession of his political calendar.

Read the full write-up [here](#).