

Freedom of Information Council: Open government items in Evers budget

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Gov. Tony Evers' budget contains at least two items of significance to the Wisconsin Freedom of Information Council.

His [Budget in Brief](#), at page 125, urges that the state's redistricting process be conducted "in the light of day," either by the Legislature or the People's Maps Commission (a panel of three retired judges that has been hosting virtual hearings over the past several months). It includes a provision that "aims to prevent the Legislature from destroying records from the map-drawing process, because the people of our state deserve to know how these maps are drawn and by whom."

The budget in brief says that because members of the Legislature "wrote themselves out of Wisconsin's public records law, they were able to destroy many of the public records from the last redistricting process." Lawmakers, in their wisdom, [exempted themselves](#) from records retention rules in place for all other state and local public officials.

The governor's [Executive Budget](#), at page 397, also "recommends that all legislative records on redistricting be retained for ten years and that all legislative meetings on redistricting comply with open meetings requirements."

The second item of interest, reported today via [tweet](#) by J.R. Ross of WisPolitics.com, appears on page 52 of the executive budget:

“28. Open Records Location Fee: The Governor recommends increasing the threshold at which a governmental entity may charge an open records location fee from \$50 to \$100. See Department of Justice, Item #26”

This is something that has been part of the Council’s [“Legislative Wish List”](#) for a decade or more:

“Update the location cost threshold

When the state’s Open Records Law passed in 1981, it stated that custodians could charge only for location fees of \$50 or more. The clear legislative intent was to give requesters an initial \$50 of free location effort, reserving this charge for larger requests. Adjusted for inflation, \$50 in 1981 would be more than \$125 today. The Council supports updating this amount; no legislation to accomplish this has been introduced.”

Actually, while the Council’s “Legislative Wish List” was just recently updated for the first time in the last several years, we did not run a new inflation check; Now it’s more like \$140 to \$150.

We hope the Legislature conducts a transparent redistricting process and that it takes this opportunity to update the law to create a more reasonable location fee threshold.



Lawmakers and others interested in making Wisconsin more transparent are invited to check out our newly updated "[Legislative Wish List](#)" for more great ideas.