

Pandemic leads to decline in 2020 per diem payments for Legislature

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Lawmakers in 2020 claimed per diems totaling \$555,149, about 70 percent of what they took home in the previous election year, as the COVID-19 pandemic cut into activity at the Capitol.

Overall, lawmakers claimed 5,498 days of per diem in 2020, compared to 8,347 in 2018.

The Assembly had largely wrapped up its work when Gov. Tony Evers' first stay-at-home order was issued in March. But the Senate canceled its final planned regular floor period with dozens of bills up for a vote after the pandemic took hold.

Senators claimed \$193,505 last year for 1,867 days, compared to \$224,540 for 2,461 days in 2018. Meanwhile, members of the Assembly claimed \$361,644 for 3,631 days, compared to \$572,700 for 5,886 days in 2018.

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Then-Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald, R-Juneau, claimed \$19,550, by far the most in the chamber. Fitzgerald was elected to Congress in November and vacated his seat in early January.

Sen. Jon Erpenbach, D-West Point, was No. 2 at \$12,305 for 107 days, while former Sen. Fred Risser, D-Madison, claimed \$12,000 for 240 days.

Senators can claim up to \$115 a day in per diems to cover travel and lodging expenses, while members living in Dane County can receive up to \$57.50.

Former state Sen. Patty Schachtner, D-Somerset, claimed \$1,610 for 14 days, which was both the smallest reimbursement amount and the fewest days claimed in the

Senate. Former state Sen. Tom Tiffany, who resigned in May after winning a special election for the 7th CD, claimed \$1,725 for 15 days.

In the Assembly, Minority Leader Gordon Hintz, D-Oshkosh, and Rep. Tim Ramthun, R-Campbellsport, each claimed \$7,533, tops in the chamber.

Rep. Tyler August, R-Lake Geneva, was No. 3 at \$7,439.

Former GOP Rep. Rob Hutton, who lost reelection in November, claimed the least at \$350 for 14 days. Former Rep. Staush Gruszynski, who lost a Dem primary in August, claimed \$1,134 for 10 days. Assembly Dems pushed him out of the caucus after a staffer accused him of sexually harassing her at a Madison bar.

Meanwhile, Rep. Jimmy Anderson, D-Fitchburg, didn't claim any per diem in 2020.

Members of the Assembly could claim up to \$162 for an overnight visit to Madison last year or \$81 for a single-day visit. In the Assembly there's no difference for members who live in Dane County.

[See the Senate per diem list](#)

[See the Assembly list](#)