

Institute for Reforming Government: WI lawmakers should investigate DPI's secret \$369K resort retreat, IRG report explains

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Delafield, Wis. – The Institute for Reforming Government (IRG) is calling on Wisconsin lawmakers to establish a **Special Committee on Oversight of the Department of Public Instruction.**

The report outlines how the legislature should investigate the actions of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) after the agency held a secretive and controversial Forward Exam standard-setting workshop at a resort in the Wisconsin Dells.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The report – [Ensuring Transparency: Legislative Oversight of DPI's Forward Exam Workshop](#) – examines concerns surrounding the June 2024 workshop—held at the Chula Vista Resort—and proposes how the Legislature could form a Special Committee to investigate the matter, including key questions lawmakers should ask DPI. According to records obtained through public reporting and IRG's legal assistance, the event cost taxpayers approximately **\$368,885** and was conducted under strict secrecy measures, including non-disclosure agreements for participants and the absence of public notice.

THE QUOTE

“Transparency is essential when government agencies make decisions

that affect students, parents, and taxpayers across the state,” said Jake Curtis, General Counsel and Director of the CIO. **“Legislative oversight is the appropriate next step to ensure the public receives a full accounting of what happened in the Dells and DPI implements necessary processes to keep the public informed.”**

IRG’s report highlights several concerns, including:

- Whether DPI violated Wisconsin’s Open Meetings Law by holding the workshop without public notice
- Why attendees were required to sign sweeping non-disclosure agreements
- Whether outside contractors influenced the secrecy surrounding the event
- Why DPI has taken months to release records related to the workshop

The controversy surrounding the workshop prompted action from the Wisconsin Legislature earlier this year, when the Joint Finance Committee temporarily withheld funding from DPI until the agency provided additional information about the conference.

WHAT’S NEXT

We urge the Wisconsin Legislature to establish a Special Committee on Oversight of the Department of Public Instruction to investigate this matter, obtain testimony from key officials involved in the workshop, and exercise its authority to request documents, subpoena witnesses, and hold hearings.

For questions, reach out to press@ReformingGovernment.org.