



New
Legislative Directory
See page 8

THE WISCONSIN TAXPAYER

Here Comes the 2015-16 Legislature

Many New Lawmakers to Confront Difficult State Budget

The 2014 elections were largely a continuation of the status quo. Republicans continue to control both houses of the legislature: 63-36 in the assembly and, pending a special election, 18-14 in the senate. Legislative turnover continued to be high, particularly in the state assembly. Twenty-six representatives are new, and combined with turnover from the last three elections, 71 of 99 assembly members have served four or fewer years. This relative inexperience will soon be tested as lawmakers begin work on the 2015-17 state budget.

Legislative observers differ over what most contributes to effective lawmaking. Some point to experience as an asset. Others say new members bring fresh ideas and approaches to unsolved problems.

The results of the recent 2014 elections will put these ideas to the test, for Wisconsin's 2015-16 legislature features many new faces. Will turnover provide an impetus for change? Or, will relative inexperience prove to be a drag on legislative success?

The new legislature's biggest job will be crafting a state budget for 2015-17. After difficult and controversial choices in the 2011-13 state budget eliminated structural imbalances, fiscal problems return heading

into the 2015-17 biennium. Budget writers have to address many issues, but fixing Wisconsin's transportation finance system is particularly pressing after years of inaction.

2014 ELECTIONS REVIEWED

In addition to electing a governor, lieutenant governor, and three constitutional officers, voters chose representatives in all 99 assembly districts and in 17 of 33 state senate districts. While many citizens think election season is limited to the fall, for many candidates it started much earlier.

Candidates

From December 2013 through May 2014, 29 state legislators—seven senators and 22 representatives—filed notifications of noncandidacy.

Four of the 22 representatives ran for—and were elected to—the state senate. These notices often trigger a rush of potential candidates trying to get on the ballot.

Open seats generally feature competitive races—in the primary election, general election, or both. However, that was not universally the case this year. Of 116 state senate and assembly seats on the November ballot, 40 were uncontested. In another 15, a major party candidate's only opposition came from one or more third party hopefuls.

Also in this issue:

Wisconsin Legislative and Congressional Directory



Table 1: State Legislative Candidates
Counts by House and Party, 2000-14

	00	02	04	06	08	10	12	14
<i>House</i>								
Assembly	203	216	229	207	244	273	261	208
Senate	35	36	39	36	25	41	36	38
<i>Party</i>								
Republican	122	130	127	115	111	171	118	133
Democrat	105	102	121	119	146	117	164	104
Other	11	20	20	9	12	26	15	9
Total	238	252	268	243	269	314	297	246

Thus, total candidate numbers were low this past year. Only 208 residents filed nomination papers for the assembly (see Table 1), down from 261 in 2012 and the lowest number since 2006 (207). The drop was due largely to fewer Democrats running; the party's 104 candidates was the lowest number since 2002 (102), and 60 fewer than in 2012.

Turnout

Despite the number of uncontested legislative races, voter turnout in 2014 was relatively high, probably due to a high profile race for governor. More than 2.4 million residents, or 54.6% of the voting-age population, went to the polls in November. Both figures were record highs for a non-presidential year (see Figure 1 on page 3). However, turnout was higher in the 2012 gubernatorial recall election (57.8%) and in all presidential-year elections since 1948 (ranging from 57.7% in 1948 to 73.2% in 2004).

2014 Wisconsin Taxpayer Index (Vol. 82)

Month	Title
January	Investigating Local Law Enforcement
February	To Exceed or Not to Exceed
March	The Impending Storm
April	A Closer Look at Public Debt
May	State Tax Rankings: Digging a Little Deeper
June/July	Issues for Voters, Questions for Candidates
August	How Have Schools Fared? Wisconsin vs. U.S.
September	Navigating the Property Tax
October	State Budget: Process and Issues
November	Total Taxes in Wisconsin, 2014
December	Here Comes the 2015-16 Legislature

Election Results

One of the most striking aspects of the 2015-16 legislature is its relative inexperience. It has 27 members with no prior experience in the legislature and another 30 with two years or less.

Assembly. All 99 members of the assembly serve two-year terms. Republicans held 60-39 majorities in each of the past two sessions. Since 29 districts had no Democratic candidate, Republicans were 60% of the way toward regaining control of the assembly before the election occurred. In November, the GOP captured 63 seats, extending its majority by three. Only three incumbents (all Democrats) lost.

While the lower chamber has a significant Republican majority, it will also be one of the "greenest" assemblies in years. Turnover has been high over the past three elections. This year, 26 new members were elected to the lower house. Similar numbers of new members were elected in 2010 (30) and 2012 (25).

The 2015-16 state assembly has 71 members (71.7%) with four or fewer years of legislative experience in Madison (see Figure 2 on page three); 53 (53.5%) with two years or less. Less than one-quarter of the assembly has at least eight years of experience.

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Senate. Following the November elections, Republicans hold an 18-14 advantage in the state senate, with district 20 (formerly held by new U.S. Representative Glen Grothman) to be filled via special election (primary held on February 17; general election, April 7). The 20th senate district is a Republican stronghold, so the GOP will likely hold a 19-14 advantage during most of the 2015-16 session.

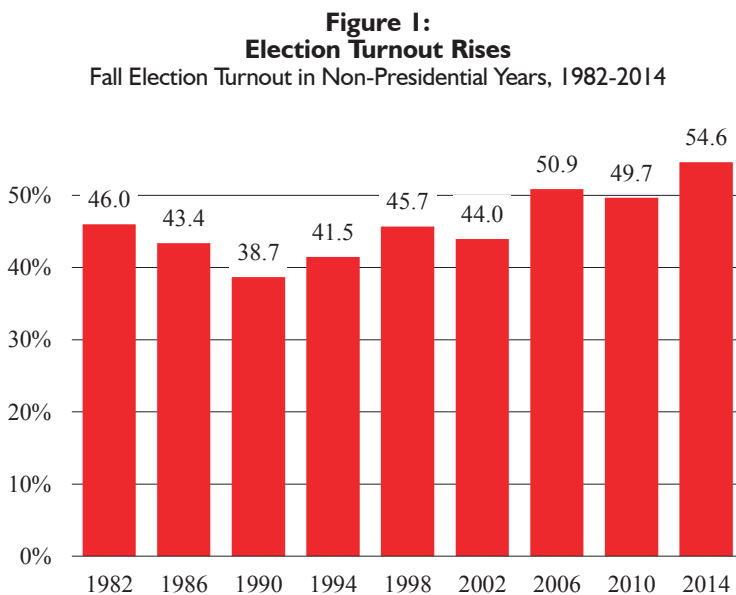
Over the past four years, control of the state senate shifted due largely to recall elections. Republicans enjoyed a 19-14 advantage after the 2010 election. In two special August 2011 elections, nine senators faced recall with Democrats gaining two seats. In June 2012, four additional senators faced recall. With one Democrat challenger winning, senate control briefly flipped to the Democrats (17-16). Republicans regained an 18-15 advantage following the 2012 elections.

In the November election, 17 seats were in play: 10 held by Republicans and seven by Democrats. Elections for the remaining 16 seats are to be held in 2016. Republicans regained control of the 21st district in the Racine area, allowing them to at least hold their 18-15 advantage.

Pending the special election results in the 20th district, seven new senators are being seated in January. Five had previous experience in the assembly, while another was a former state senator.

Gender

Among the seven new senators, two are women. Wisconsin has 11 female senators in 2015, the highest



number ever. The number of women in the assembly is down by two to 22.

Combined, women hold 33 of 132 (25%) seats in the state legislature, a share that is slightly above the 2014 national average (24.2%). In that year, female representation was highest in Colorado (41.0%) and Vermont (40.6%). In both Arizona and Minnesota, women held more than one-third of the seats. In Alabama, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and South Carolina, these percentages were under 15%.

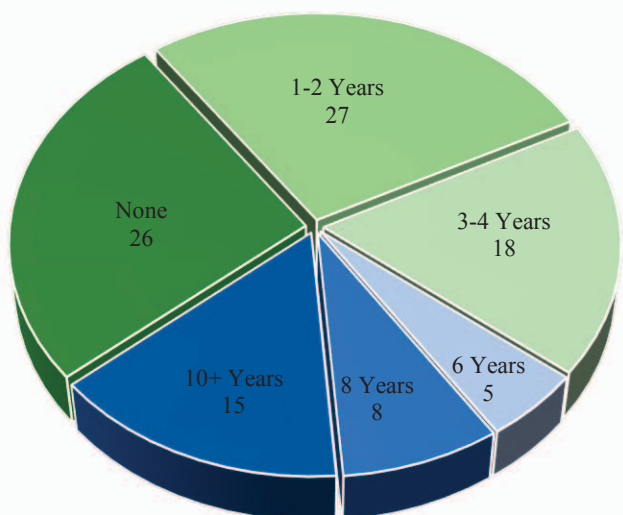
Legislative Leadership

Party leadership in both the senate and assembly has partially changed. In the senate, Scott Fitzgerald (R-Juneau) remains majority leader and is assisted by Paul Farrow (R-Pewaukee). Mary Lazich (R-New Berlin) is senate president. Democrats have a new minority leader—Jennifer Shilling (D-La Crosse)—who replaces Chris Larson (D-Milwaukee).

In the assembly, Robin Vos (R-Burlington) returns as speaker, while Jim Steineke (R-Kaukauna) replaces Scott Suder (R-Abbotsford) as majority leader. Assembly Democrats are again led by Peter Barca (D-Kenosha).

Committee assignments also change with a new legislature. A full list is printed in a new 2015-16 *Legislative and Congressional Directory* from the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance. The directory also includes a complete list of 2015-16 senators and representatives, contact information, and district maps (see back page).

**Figure 2:
New State Assembly “Green”**
Count by Years of State Leg. Experience, 2015 State Assembly



Members of the 2015 Wisconsin State Senate and Assembly

STATE SENATE DISTRICTS

Sen. Dist.	Asmb. Dist.	Senator (Party)	Phone
1.	1, 2, 3	Lasee, Frank (R)	266-3512
2.	4, 5, 6	Cowles, Robert (R)	266-0484
3.	7, 8, 9	Carpenter, Tim (D)	266-8535
4.	10, 11, 12	Taylor, Lena C. (D)	266-5810
5.	13, 14, 15	Vukmir, Leah (R)	266-2512
6.	16, 17, 18	Harris Dodd, Nikiya (D)	266-2500
7.	19, 20, 21	Larson, Chris (D)	266-7505
8.	22, 23, 24	Darling, Alberta (R)	266-5830
9.	25, 26, 27	LeMahieu, Devin* (R)	266-2056
10.	28, 29, 30	Harsdorf, Sheila (R)	266-7745
11.	31, 32, 33	Nass, Steve* (R)	266-2635
12.	34, 35, 36	Tiffany, Tom (R)	266-2509
13.	37, 38, 39	Fitzgerald, Scott (R)	266-5660
14.	40, 41, 42	Olsen, Luther S. (R)	266-0751
15.	43, 44, 45	Ringhand, Janis* (D)	266-2253
16.	46, 47, 48	Miller, Mark (D)	266-9170
17.	49, 50, 51	Marklein, Howard* (R)	266-0703
18.	52, 53, 54	Gudex, Rick (R)	266-5300
19.	55, 56, 57	Roth, Roger (R)	266-0718
20.	58, 59, 60	TBD (April 2015 spec. election)	266-7513
21.	61, 62, 63	Wanggaard, Van* (R)	266-1832
22.	64, 65, 66	Wirch, Robert W. (D)	267-8979
23.	67, 68, 69	Moulton, Terry (R)	266-7511
24.	70, 71, 72	Lassa, Julie (D)	266-3123
25.	73, 74, 75	Bewley, Janet* (D)	266-3510
26.	76, 77, 78	Risser, Fred A. (D)	266-1627
27.	79, 80, 81	Erpenbach, Jon (D)	266-6670
28.	82, 83, 84	Lazich, Mary (R)	266-5400
29.	85, 86, 87	Petrowski, Jerry (R)	266-2502
30.	88, 89, 90	Hansen, Dave (D)	266-5670
31.	91, 92, 93	Vinehout, Kathleen (D)	266-8546
32.	94, 95, 96	Shilling, Jennifer (D)	266-5490
33.	97, 98, 99	Farrow, Paul (R)	266-9174

*Newly elected.

Notes: Numbers are for legislative officers, area code 608.

Senator email: sen.(insert last name)@legis.wisconsin.gov

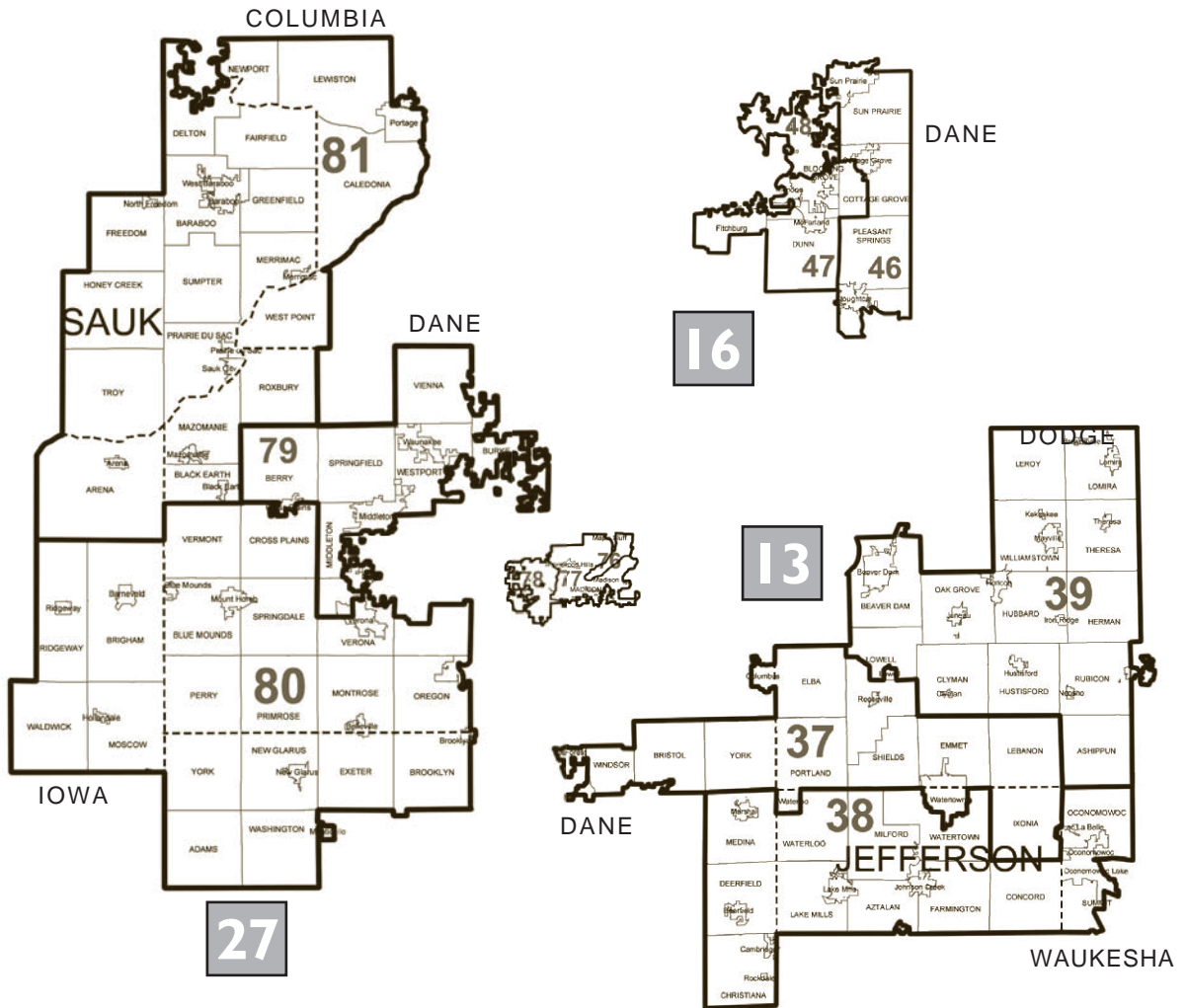
Representative email: rep.(insert last name)@legis.wisconsin.gov

(For Jim and Al Ott and for Ed and Robert Brooks insert last name and first initial.)

STATE ASSEMBLY DISTRICTS

Dist.	Rep. (Party)	Phone	Dist.	Rep. (Party)
1.	Kitchens, Joel* (R)	266-5350	39.	Born, Mark
2.	Jacque, Andre (R)	266-9870	40.	Petersen, Ke
3.	Ott, Al (R)	266-5831	41.	Ballweg, Jo
4.	Steffen, David* (R)	266-5840	42.	Ripp, Keith
5.	Steineke, Jim (R)	266-2418	43.	Jorgensen, A
6.	Tauchen, Gary (R)	266-3097	44.	Kolste, Deb
7.	Riemer, Daniel (D)	266-1733	45.	Spreitzer, M
8.	Zamarripa, JoCasta (D)	267-7669	46.	Hebl, Gary
9.	Zepnick, Josh (D)	266-1707	47.	Kahl, Robb
10.	Bowen, David* (D)	266-7671	48.	Sargent, Me
11.	Barnes, Mandela (D)	266-3756	49.	Tranel, Trav
12.	Kessler, Federick P. (D)	266-5813	50.	Brooks, Ed
13.	Hutton, Rob (R)	267-9836	51.	Novak, Tod
14.	Kooyenga, Dale (R)	266-9180	52.	Thiesfeldt, J
15.	Sanfelippo, Joe (R)	266-0620	53.	Schraa, Mic
16.	Young, Leon D. (D)	266-3786	54.	Hintz, Gord
17.	Johnson, La Tonya (D)	266-5580	55.	Rohrkaste, M
18.	Goyke, Evan (D)	266-0645	56.	Murphy, Da
19.	Brostoff, Jonathan* (D)	266-0650	57.	Stuck, Aman
20.	Sinicki, Christine (D)	266-8588	58.	Gannon, Bo
21.	Rodriguez, Jessie (R)	266-0610	59.	Kremer, Jes
22.	Brandtjen, Janel* (R)	267-2367	60.	Brooks, Rob
23.	Ott, Jim (R)	266-0486	61.	Kerkman, S
24.	Knodl, Dan (R)	266-3796	62.	Weatherstor
25.	Tittl, Paul (R)	266-0315	63.	Vos, Robin
26.	Katsma, Terry* (R)	266-0656	64.	Barca, Peter
27.	Vorpapel, Tyler* (R)	266-8530	65.	Ohnstad, To
28.	Jarchow, Adam* (R)	267-2365	66.	Mason, Cor
29.	Murtha John (R)	266-7683	67.	Larson, Tom
30.	Knudson, Dean (R)	266-1526	68.	Bernier, Kat
31.	Loudenbeck, Amy (R)	266-9967	69.	Kulp, Bob*
32.	August, Tyler (R)	266-1190	70.	Vander Mee
33.	Horlacher, Cody* (R)	266-5715	71.	Shankland,
34.	Swearingen, Rob (R)	266-7141	72.	Krug, Scott
35.	Czaja, Mary (R)	266-7694	73.	Milroy, Nic
36.	Mursau, Jeffrey L. (R)	266-3780	74.	Meyers, Bet
37.	Jagler, John (R)	266-9650	75.	Quinn, Rob
38.	Kleefisch, Joel (R)	266-8551	76.	Taylor, Chri

(Party)	Phone
Mark L. (R)	266-2540
n, Kevin (R)	266-3794
g, Joan (R)	266-8077
Keith (R)	266-3404
sen, Andy (D)	266-3790
Debra (D)	266-7503
er, Mark* (D)	266-1192
Gary (D)	266-7678
Robb (D)	266-8570
t, Melissa Agard (D)	266-0960
Travis (R)	266-1170
s, Ed (R)	266-8531
Todd (R)	266-7502
eldt, Jeremy (R)	266-3156
, Michael (R)	267-7990
Gordon (D)	266-2254
aste, Mike* (R)	266-5719
y, Dave (R)	266-7500
Amanda* (D)	266-3070
n, Bob* (R)	264-8486
r, Jesse* (R)	266-9175
s, Robert* (R)	267-2369
an, Samantha (R)	266-2530
erston, Tom (R)	266-0731
obbin J. (R)	266-3387
Peter W. (D)	266-5504
d, Tod (D)	266-0455
Cory (D)	266-0634
Tom (R)	266-1194
r, Kathy (R)	266-9172
Bob* (R)	266-2401
Meer, Nancy L. (R)	266-8366
and, Katrina (D)	267-9649
Scott S. (R)	266-0215
, Nick (D)	266-0640
s, Beth* (D)	266-7690
Robert Romaine* (R)	266-2519
Chris (D)	266-5342



Dist.	Rep. (Party)	Phone
77.	Berceau, Terese (D)	266-3784
78.	Subek, Lisa* (D)	266-7521
79.	Hesselbein, Dianne (D)	266-5340
80.	Pope, Sony (D)	266-3520
81.	Considine, Dave* (D)	266-7746
82.	Skowronski, Ken (R)	266-8590
83.	Craig, Dave (R)	266-3363
84.	Kuglitsch, Mike (R)	267-5158
85.	Heaton, Dave* (R)	266-0654
86.	Spiros, John* (R)	266-1182
87.	Edming, James W.* (R)	266-7506
88.	Macco, John* (R)	266-0485

Dist.	Rep. (Party)	Phone
89.	Nygren, John (R)	266-2343
90.	Genrich, Eric (D)	266-0616
91.	Wachs, Dana (D)	266-7461
92.	Danou, Chris (D)	266-7015
93.	Petryk, Warren (R)	266-0660
94.	Doyle, Steve (D)	266-0631
95.	Billings, Jill (D)	266-5780
96.	Nerison, Lee A. (R)	266-3534
97.	Allen, Scott* (R)	266-8580
98.	Neylon, Adam (R)	266-5120
99.	Kapenga, Chris (R)	266-3007

Session Schedule

The 2015-16 session officially runs from inauguration on January 5, 2015 through the first week of January in 2017. However, legislators do not spend all of that time in Madison debating legislation.

Legislative leadership has scheduled 107 regular floor days, with the last in early April 2016. Another five “limited business” sessions are scheduled for the end of April and mid-May 2016.

More than half of the floor days are scheduled for the first six months of 2015. Leadership has scheduled 24 floor sessions through the first week of March to deal primarily with “non-budget” legislation. The 2013-14 legislature scheduled 17 floor sessions during this same period. From mid-March through the end of June, another 35 floor days are scheduled to deal primarily with the state budget. Again, that figure is higher than the 28 scheduled in early 2013.

Following a summer recess, the legislature will meet for 21 days from mid-September through early November. It will wrap up its regular business with 27 days on the floor from January through April 2016. After that, campaign season returns.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

Since his initial election in 2010, Governor Scott Walker (R) has indicated that job creation is his highest priority. That continues to be a major focus for the governor and new legislature. However, of more immediate concern is the legislature’s most important task: the 2015-17 state budget. Governor Walker presents his budget to the legislature in early February (or possibly late January). From there, the legislature takes over, altering the bill to their liking and returning it to the governor—most

likely in June—for his signature. The ever-changing outlook for state finances will play a role in budget discussions.

Economy

The amount of revenue the state will have available for 2015-17 depends on economic conditions over the next several years. A first look at what might be expected was contained in last fall’s issue of *Wisconsin Economic Outlook* from the state Department of Revenue (DOR). The health of the economy will be revisited in January by the Legislative Fiscal Bureau (LFB).

Job Growth. Strong job growth strengthens state finances as it yields additional income and sales tax revenue while requiring less for income-support programs. Between 2011 and 2013, job growth in Wisconsin averaged 1.1% per year. State economists expect that rate to average 1.3% per year during 2014-17. At the same time, the unemployment rate is expected to decline from 5.8% in 2014 to 5.1% in 2017.

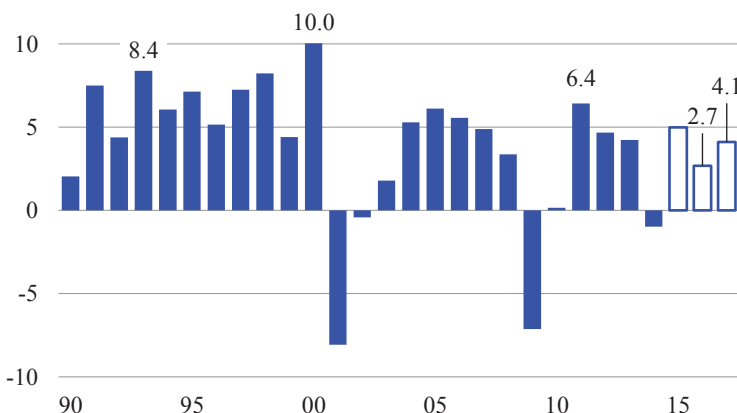
Personal Income. With more state residents working, total Wisconsin personal income is also expected to climb at an accelerating pace. Personal income rose 2.7% in 2013 and is expected to grow 3.1% in 2014. DOR officials project more rapid growth in 2015-17, with annual increases reaching 5.3% in 2017.

Current Year Deficit?

Despite prospects for relatively good job growth and rising incomes, the current and subsequent state budgets will face challenges. Based on recent tax collections, the DOR fall economic forecast, and recent tax law changes, state officials projected tax revenues for the remainder of the 2015 fiscal year and for the 2015-17 biennium. These revenue estimates are updated by the LFB in January and possibly again later.

As of November 20th, state officials projected tax collections for the current fiscal year to grow 5.0%. While the rate of growth is fairly strong, it would leave collections below the budgeted amount and would create a \$132.1 million deficit by June 30. However, in its November 20th report, the state Department of Administration secretary promised that “through continued prudent management of agency resources, the shortfall will be addressed and the current biennium will end in balance.” No details were offered. However, should tax collections continue to lag, the new legislature may have to approve a “budget repair bill” this spring to fix any pending deficit.

Figure 3:
Annual Pct. Change in General Fund Tax Collections
1990-2014 Actual; 2015-17 Estimates



Revenues for 2015-17

For the 2015-17 biennium, state officials expect annual collection growth to slow to 2.7% and 4.1%, respectively (see Figure 3 on page 6). These rates of increase mean the state will have about \$1.4 billion in new tax money during the two years. However, that does not translate into \$1.4 billion of new spending. During 2014-15, the state is paying for some of its general fund spending by drawing down a \$517 million surplus. A portion of the \$1.4 billion will be need to pay for those expenditures, should they continue in the next biennium.

By Tax. All new tax revenue will come from either the income tax (68.6%) or the sales tax (32.7%), with little change expected in other general fund taxes. Given the sensitivity of these two taxes to economic conditions, an unexpected improvement or decline in the economy will significantly impact state finances.

Spending

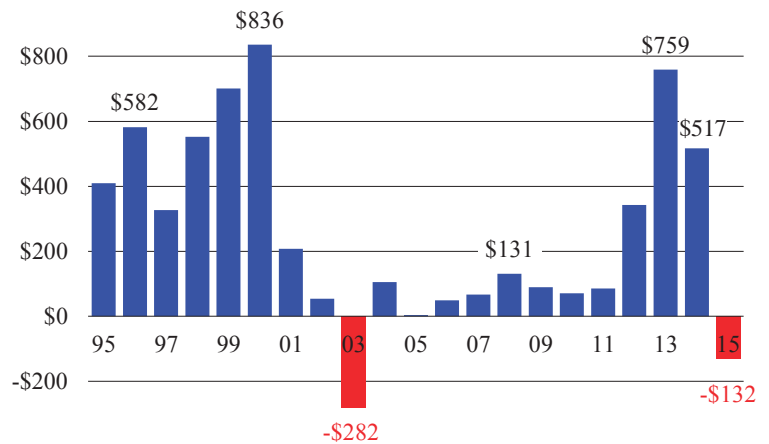
Revenues represent only half of the state budget picture; spending is the other half. Agency requests are the only expenditure figures available before the budget process begins in earnest in February. These requests were combined with the DOR revenue estimates and released to the public in the November 20th report.

Requests. That report showed agencies requesting an additional \$757 million of general purpose revenue (GPR) in 2016 (compared to their 2015 base). Requests for 2017 are \$994 million more than for 2016.

If the state were to approve all agency requests, it would need another \$2.2 billion in tax revenue to balance the two-year budget. However, history shows that not all of these agency requests will be granted. In preparing his budget, the governor will have to trim requested amounts to match available revenues, or increase taxes and fees to pay for new spending.

Nearly all of the additional requested spending comes from three agencies. Compared to 2015 levels, the Department of Health Services is requesting \$832 million in new funds over the next two years, mostly to fund Medicaid, a federal-state health program for low-income and disabled residents. The Department of Public Instruction is asking for \$695 million in additional GPR support, while the Department of Transportation (DOT) is requesting \$276 million of

Figure 4:
General Fund Ending Balances Falling
1995-2014 Actual, 2015 Estimated



additional money. Historically, DOT was funded with gas taxes, vehicle registration fees, and other earmarked transportation revenues. However, the last two state budgets have shifted some GPR tax dollars to the state transportation fund. The DOT is looking to increase the amount of those transfers.

Cost to Continue. A second way to look at future spending is on a cost-to-continue basis. In other words, how much would the state have to spend to continue its current functions, accounting for changes in case loads and population. According to the LFB, if the Governor’s budget simply continued its current functions, the state would need, in addition to the \$1.4 billion in projected new money, another \$824 million in revenues during 2015-17.

Saving For a Rainy Day?

Wisconsin has a “rainy day” fund, though it was never funded until recently. The fund provides a cushion should the economy turn down and tax collections lag temporarily. Public finance experts often suggest states keep, at minimum, 5% of spending in this type of fund. Wisconsin’s rainy-day fund balance is currently \$280 million, or about 1.8% of state general fund spending.

State officials are not adding to the fund this year, and with modest revenue growth expected over the next two years, future additions are unlikely. That leaves state finances vulnerable to the uncertainty associated with an aging economic expansion. □

DATA SOURCES:

Wisconsin Department of Administration; Wisconsin Department of Revenue; Wisconsin Legislative Fiscal Bureau.

