

## MEMORANDUM

TO: José G. Pérez

FROM: Tea B. Norfolk, Legislative Reference Bureau

DATE: September 26, 2023

RE: Salary Increases for Elected Officials

This memo is in response to your request for information relating to the last time Common Council members received a salary increase, the amount that Common Council salaries would be if members would have received a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) each year since that increase, and salary increases for State and Federal legislators since the last time Common Council members received a salary increase.

The last time the Common Council president or members received a salary increase was 2008. Since that time, the salary for a Common Council member has been fixed at \$73,222.24, and the salary for the Common Council President has been fixed at \$82,749.16. In the same time period, salaries for both sworn and general City employees have increased, although sworn salaries increased considerably more.

The table below shows the projected salary calculations for Common Council members and the President if they had received the same COLA as resident general city employees.

### Common Council Salary Projection with Annual COLA

Year	COLA Increase	Common Council Member	Common Council President
2008	--	\$73,222.24	\$82,749.16
2009	1.5%*	\$74,320.57	\$83,749.16
2010	0%	\$74,320.57	\$83,749.16
2011	0%	\$74,320.57	\$83,749.16
2012	0%	\$74,320.57	\$83,749.16
2013	1.5%	\$75,435.38	\$85,005.40
2014	1%	\$76,189.73	\$85,855.45
2015	0%	\$76,189.73	\$85,855.45

2016	2%	\$77,713.52	\$87,572.56
2017	2%	\$79,267.79	\$89,324.01
2018	2%	\$80,853.15	\$91,110.49
2019	3%+	\$83,278.74	\$93,843.80
2020	0%	\$83,279.74	\$93,843.80
2021	0%	\$83,279.74	\$93,843.80
2022	2%	\$84,945.31	\$95,720.68
2023	2%	\$86,644.22	\$97,635.09
2024	2%	\$88,377.10	\$99,587.79

\* 1% increase on Pay Period 1 + 1% increase on Pay Period 14.

+ Increase is for residents only.

If a Common Council member had received a 2% increase every year since 2008, the 2024 salary would be \$100,518.40. If the Common Council president had received a 2% increase every year since 2008, the 2024 salary would be \$113,596.87.

The salary of a Common Council member, starting with the 2023 salary as a base and adding a 15% increase, is as follows:

$$\$73,222.24 \times 0.15 = \$10,983.34 + \$73,222.24 = \underline{\$84,205.58}$$

The salary of the Common Council President, starting with the 2023 salary as a base and adding a 15% increase, is as follows:

$$\$82,749.16 \times 0.15 = \$12,412.37 + \$82,749.16 = \underline{\$95,161.53}$$

### **Wisconsin Legislators**

According to the State Legislative Reference Bureau’s report, “Salaries of Wisconsin State Elected Officials,” which is produced biennially, the salary increases for legislators were as follows:

2009	\$49,943	
2017	\$50,950	2%
2019	\$52,999	4%
2021	\$55,141	4%
2023	\$57,408	4%

### **Federal Legislators**

Federal legislators’ pay has remained unchanged since 2009. The approximately 4.6% annual increase has been voted down each year since then. The following information was provided in a September 19,

2023 report prepared by Congressional Research Service, “Congressional Salaries and Allowances: In Brief”:

The compensation for most Senators, Representatives, Delegates, and the Resident Commissioner from Puerto Rico is \$174,000. The only exceptions include the Speaker of the House (salary of \$223,500), the President pro tempore of the Senate and the majority and minority leaders in the House and Senate (all have a salary of \$193,400).

These levels have remained unchanged since 2009. Subsequent scheduled annual adjustments were denied by P.L. 111-8 (enacted March 11, 2009), P.L. 111-165 (May 14, 2010), P.L. 111-322 (December 22, 2010), P.L. 112-175 (September 28, 2012), P.L. 112-240 (January 2, 2013), P.L. 113-46 (October 17, 2013), P.L. 113-235 (December 16, 2014), P.L. 114-113 (December 18, 2015), P.L. 114-254 (December 10, 2016), P.L. 115-141 (March 23, 2018), P.L. 115-244 (September 21, 2018), P.L. 116-94 (December 20, 2019), P.L. 116-260 (December 27, 2020), P.L. 117-103 (March 15, 2022), and P.L. 117-328 (December 29, 2022).

The Senate-reported version of the FY2024 legislative branch appropriations bill (S. 2302) would prohibit the scheduled January 2024 adjustment of 4.6%, or \$8,000 (Section 211).

The report further notes the following rationale in a footnote:

The potential Member pay adjustments are determined by a formula using the Employment Cost Index (private industry wages and salaries, not seasonally adjusted), based on the 12-month percentage change reported for the quarter ending December 31, minus 0.5%. Pursuant to 2 U.S.C. §4501(2)(A), this amount is “rounded to the nearest multiple of \$100.” Each year, the adjustment takes effect automatically unless it is either denied or modified statutorily by Congress, or limited by the General Schedule (GS) base pay adjustment, since the percentage increase in Member pay is limited by law to the GS base pay percentage increase.

According to an August 29, 2023, report by Congressional Research Service, “Salaries of Members of Congress: Recent Actions and Historical Tables,” the salaries for members of Congress, when adjusted for inflation, have decreased approximately 29% from 2009 to 2023.

### **Peer Cities**

Comparisons of city council member salaries in other cities are not necessarily meaningful, given that council members in some cities are part-time. Most cities reported upward salary adjustments of at least a 2.5% within the last two years. The largest increases were in Atlanta (17%), Fresno (15%), Des Moines (11%) and Chicago (9%).

In many cities, council member wages are not uniform. Variations can be attributed to individual council members refusing to take raises or cost-of-living adjustments, especially during the economic

downturn in 2008-09, salary increases not taking effect for sitting council members until the following election cycle, and increased salaries for council presidents.

In some cities, council members are required to vote in order to increase their salaries. However, in other cities, salaries are tied to some other factor by ordinance so that salaries may increase without council intervention. For example, Chicago and Seattle council members receive automatic cost-of-living adjustments annually or biennially. Raises for Baltimore, Cleveland, and St. Paul council members are tied to raises negotiated by city labor groups. Las Vegas council member salaries are adjusted to track local county commissioners' salaries.

Baltimore, Chicago, Des Moines, Las Vegas, St. Paul, and Washington, D.C. consider council membership a part-time position, while the remaining cities consider council membership a full-time position. Atlanta and Cincinnati's city charters do not specify whether council members are full- or part-time, but traditionally they are considered part-time. With the exception of Des Moines, each city provides salary and benefits congruent with a full-time position regardless of status. Notably, Washington, D.C., and Chicago council members are amongst the highest paid, and both have part-time positions.

The salaries listed in the table below are the highest possible salary for regular council members, regardless of how or why a salary increase was obtained.

	<b>Population</b>	<b>Council Size</b>	<b>2022 Salary</b>	<b>Last Salary Increase</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>Atlanta</b>	463,878	15	\$ 72,360	2021: 17% increase from \$62,000	Part-time
<b>Baltimore</b>	621,849	15	\$ 76,660	2022: 2.5% increase from \$74,790	Part-time
<b>Boston</b>	667,137	13	\$103,500	2020: 4% increase from \$99,500	Full-time
<b>Chicago</b>	2,720,546	50	\$117,333	2023: 9% COLA adjustment	Part-time
<b>Cleveland</b>	388,072	17	\$ 80,133	2020: City charter amended to limit annual salary increase to same percentage increase as city unions	Full-time
<b>Denver</b>	682,545	13	\$ 94,236	2019: 2.5% increase from \$91,915	Full-time
<b>Des Moines</b>	210,330	6	\$ 28,880	2019: 11% increase from \$26,500	Part-time
<b>Detroit</b>	677,116	9	\$ 82,749	2019: 3% increase from \$78,761	Full-time
<b>Fresno</b>	520,052	7	\$ 92,000	2022: 15% increase from \$80,000	Full-time
<b>Las Vegas</b>	623,747	6	\$ 82,144	2019: 4.2% increase from \$78,787	Part-time
<b>Minneapolis</b>	410,939	13	\$106,101	2021: 2.5% increase from \$103,590	Full-time
<b>Portland</b>	632,309	5	\$127,712	2022: Increase from \$125,694	Full-time
<b>Sacramento</b>	490,712	8	\$ 91,915	2021: 4.72% increase from \$91,257	Full-time
<b>Seattle</b>	684,451	9	\$131,640	2021: 7% increase from \$122,886	Full-time
<b>St. Paul</b>	300,851	7	\$ 67,900	2022: 7% increase from 63,003	Part-time
<b>Wash. D.C.</b>	672,228	13	\$141,282	2022: 3% COLA from \$137,282	Part-time