



MARY FELZKOWSKI

STATE SENATOR • 12TH SENATE DISTRICT

Testimony on SB 224

Senate Committee on Government Operations

Senator Mary Felzkowski

12th Senate District

September 27, 2023

Good afternoon Chairman Stroebel and Committee Members,

Thank you for taking the time to hear testimony on SB 224, which would eliminate the accrual of sick leave for Wisconsin legislators moving forward.

In Wisconsin, state legislators are awarded 10.5625 sick leave days per year. Unused sick days accumulate from year to year through the state's accumulated sick leave conversion credit (ASLCC) program. Upon retirement, these credits can be used to pay for the state retiree's group health insurance premiums. Currently, only five other states offer their retirees this benefit.

As of February of 2023 the estimated value of these sick leave credits for 132 legislators was **\$5,643,801.05**, which averages to **\$42,756** per legislator. In 2022, retired legislators used their credits to pay for **\$1,643,798** in healthcare premiums. This extra perk boasts a big price tag, allowing elected officials to potentially claim tens of thousands, and even upwards of one hundred thousand dollars in additional post-retirement benefits.

As elected Representatives and Senators, we do not need to 'report' to HR when we are sick, and we simply have the ability to cancel meetings and not attend hearings if we are ill. Due to this limited and/or non-use of sick days by legislators, this program has become almost entirely a post-retirement political perk.

This legislation would eliminate this perk by providing that no State Senator or Representative would be allowed to accrue new sick leave beyond their current term. This bill is prospective and will **not** affect sick leave accrued prior to a legislator's next election date, meaning credits earned through the current term will be honored.

I hope you can join me in supporting this legislation and I'm happy to take any questions.



DAVID STEFFEN

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 4th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

September 27, 2023

Testimony to the Senate Committee on Government Operations: Senate Bill 224

Chairman Stroebel and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 224, which would eliminate the accrual of sick leave for Wisconsin state legislators moving forward. This is a bipartisan proposal that I have authored and re-authored since I was first sworn in for state service back in 2015. And today, in 2023, the issue remains the same: allowing state legislators to bank unused sick days to help pay for their health insurance premiums during retirement is a costly, post-retirement political perk.

As state legislators, I'm sure we have all experienced a situation where we felt under-the-weather and needed to reschedule meetings or miss a hearing. It's a simple enough situation to accommodate. What we don't have to do is "call in sick" to human resources and have a sick day deducted from our annual allotment of 10.5 days. So what happens to those unused sick days? They build up in the state's accumulated sick leave conversion credit program. Credits can then be cashed in to help pay for health insurance costs after a legislator has retired. Even after death, these credits can be passed on to the annuitant's survivor.

The costs of this perk add up. As of February 1, 2023 the estimated value of these sick leave credits for 132 legislators was **\$5,643,801.05**, which averages to **\$42,756** per legislator. In 2022, retired legislators used their credits to pay for **\$1,643,798** in healthcare premiums. This extra perk boasts a big price tag, allowing elected officials to potentially claim tens of thousands, and even upwards of one hundred thousand dollars in additional post-retirement benefits.

Senate Bill 224 eliminates this taxpayer funded perk by eliminating the accrual of sick leave moving forward—meaning that any time or credits that have already been accrued by legislators will not be impacted by this bill.

I am very proud to have worked with Senator Felzkowski on Senate Bill 224 and hope you will join us in supporting this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Steffen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "D" and "S".

David Steffen
State Representative
4th Assembly District