

OPINION

Capitol report

Ethics forms detail lawmakers' travel, including trips to Poland, Taiwan

Wisconsin lawmakers last year headed to Poland for a trade mission and Taiwan for meetings with foreign dignitaries with other Midwestern legislators, according to their latest economic interest filings.

Others reported hitting a series of U.S. destinations, ranging from Los Angeles to Lake Buena Vista, Fla., and Washington, D.C., for a variety of conferences, events and speaking engagements.

The travel was detailed in the 2018 economic interest statements for all 132 lawmakers who were then serving in the Legislature. The reports, requested and reviewed by WisPolitics.com, showed 44 lawmakers reported more than \$149,000 in speaking fees and travel expenses.

That total, though, could be inflated because the check found instances where lawmakers may have misreported the costs of their trips.

There are two columns under the honoraria section of the form: one is for "expenses value" for lodging, meals and other expenses. The other is for the "honorarium amount," which can include compensation for presenting a talk, participating in a meeting or publishing work about issues initiated by or affecting state government or state agencies, according to the Ethics Commission.

Some lawmakers listed the same dollar figure under both columns in the section, an indicator that the files could be filled out incorrectly.

Assembly Speaker Robin Vos topped the Legislature in his travel totals, logging \$16,300 for eight conferences or expenses from groups last year. His sum is slightly higher than the honoraria he listed in calendar year 2017 — \$13,481, per past reporting.

Vos made several domestic trips, including

to Los Angeles for the National Conference of State Legislatures legislative summit in late July. He also hosted the State Legislative Leaders Foundation's National Speakers Conference annual meeting in Milwaukee in late August.

The Rochester Republican is currently the president-elect of the NCSL and serves as vice chair of the SLLF. A Vos spokeswoman said that he was proud to represent Wisconsin in bipartisan organizations and noted that his positions require frequent travel.

Lawmakers are able to accept travel expenses to go to conferences, meetings, talks or other events relating to official business, according to the Ethics Commission forms. They're then required to list transportation, meals, lodging or honoraria with a total value of \$50 or more.

A handful of lawmakers — including Reps. Joel Kitchens, R-Sturgeon Bay, and Scott Allen, R-Waukesha, as well as Sen. Tom Tiffany, R-Minocqua — were among those who traveled to Taiwan last August.

The trip, which was covered by the Taiwanese government, included other lawmakers from Iowa, Illinois and Minnesota, according to Kitchens' office. Each day consisted of meetings with officials from various government entities, including the Mainland Affairs Council, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Republic of China Legislature and the Ministry of Foreign Trade.

Kitchens and Allens' SEI forms showed the cost of the visit was \$7,529. Tiffany's form didn't list the cost; rather, he filed it under the form's "entertainment and gifts" section, which must be listed if the value is more than \$50.

Those three weren't the

only ones who traveled internationally last year. Reps. Cody Hurlacher, R-Mukwonago, and Ken Skowronski, R-Franklin, Sen. Dan Feyen, R-Fond du Lac, and then-Rep. Peter Barca, D-Kenosha, headed to Poland in October to promote trade and economic growth between the country and Wisconsin.

The trip included discussions with the U.S. ambassador to Poland, tours of area businesses and meetings with local elected officials, per Skowronski's office.

"Trades missions such as this between states, elected officials and businesses are paramount to fostering strong relationships and economies between trade partners," a staffer for Skowronski wrote in an email.

Barca, now Revenue secretary, didn't initially have the trip listed on his SEI form. But an agency spokeswoman, whom WisPolitics.com contacted after hearing he was among those who traveled there, said it was omitted in error and the form has since been corrected.

The trip, which the forms showed cost around \$2,000, came about after the governor of Lublin province personally invited the four lawmakers, and that government picked up the tab. Skowronski's office said the state jobs agency also was notified of the trip and assisted in preparations but wasn't directly involved and no WEDC officials were able to attend.

In the state Senate, Feyen logged the highest honoraria over 2018, listing \$5,393 in expenses for a total of four trips: the Poland trade mission; an October Foundation for Government Accountability-sponsored seminar in Lake Buena Vista, Fla., "focused on the

workforce, welfare reform and healthcare reform," per his office; a September National Conference of State Legislatures gathering in Denver for broadband and cable policy meetings; and a June Lakeland College seminar on "Economics for Elected Officials" in Sheboygan.

Rep. Lisa Subeck, D-Madison, topped her party in the Assembly, while Sen. Lena Taylor, of Milwaukee, led her chamber's Democrats.

Subeck listed six conferences or travel on her form, totaling \$3,578. They included: a July policy summit organized by the Public Leadership Institute in Washington, D.C.; a National Council of Environmental Legislators forum in Los Angeles later that month; a September Great Lakes Legislative Council and Water Policy Task Force meeting in Erie, Pa.; and a November National Foundation of Women Legislators board meeting in D.C.

Taylor, meanwhile, logged \$3,221 in total expenses for the year including: trips to the annual Women in Government national legislative conference in June; the Urban Agriculture Academy Conference in July; and the National Black Caucus of State Legislators legislative conference at the end of November.

Michelle Bryant, Taylor's chief of staff, said the senator attended these conferences in order to "stay current" on relevant topics.

The Capitol Report is written by editorial staff at WisPolitics.com, a nonpartisan, Madison-based news service that specializes in coverage of government and politics, and is distributed for publication by members of the Wisconsin Newspaper Association.

Death notices

KAREN MADAUS

Karen Long Loback Madaus, 74, of Janesville, died at Rock Haven Nursing home on Saturday, June 1. Funeral services will be at 10:30 a.m.,

Thursday, June 6 at Jefferson Prairie Lutheran Church. Friends may call Betzer Funeral Home in Delavan on Wednesday, June 5 between 5 and 8 p.m.

JERRY D. OZEE

Jerry D. Ozee, 82, of Delavan, formerly of Waukegan, Ill., died on June

1, 2019, at Delavan Health Services in Delavan. Monroe Funeral Home in Delavan is assisting the family.

Senior menu

Walworth County Department of Health and Human Services hosts a nutrition program for older adults.

In Delavan at Lake Comus Apartments, 207 McDowell St., lunch is served at 11:30 a.m. on Monday, Wednesday and Friday and at Westshire at the Lakes, 5680 Parliament Lane on Tuesday and Thursday.

The meal is open to anyone older than 60 and their spouse. Each senior is asked to contribute a \$2.50 donation.

For more information, call (262) 728-5618 or (262) 903-9389.

June 6 – June 14
Thursday – Western meatloaf, mashed potatoes, broccoli, angel food cake, strawberries, whipped topping, wheat roll

Friday – chicken salad, baby spinach salad, mandarin oranges, cran-apple crisp, wheat roll

Monday – hamburger on whole wheat bun, black beans, corn, fruit Jell-O

Tuesday – lemon pepper fish, red potatoes, broccoli, pumpkin bar, wheat bread

Wednesday – macaroni and cheese with ham, peas, carrots, mandarin oranges

Thursday – spaghetti and meatballs, tossed salad, green beans, garlic bread, tropical fruit cup

Friday – sub sandwich on whole wheat bun, creamy coleslaw, peaches, oatmeal raisin cookie



Dr. Scott Beatse

Local doctor dies of heart attack

Scott Beatse was competing in triathlon

Dr. Scott Beatse, a longtime obstetrician and gynecologist at Aurora Lakeland Medical Center in Elkhorn, died Sunday morning of an apparent heart attack during a triathlon.

"I never thought I would post something like this. Scott Beatse the love of my life passed away this morning," his wife, Marsha, stated in a post on Facebook Sunday evening.

She included a photograph of her husband that she had taken that morning.

"I took this picture of him just before he got in the water; he was doing a triathlon... had a heart attack and died," Marsha Beatse wrote.

"I am numb right now; so devastating... everyone loved him," she added.

Word spread quickly and by late Sunday night, people who had worked with Dr. Beatse to the mothers of children he delivered – were sharing their disbelief and grief on Facebook and other social media platforms.

A complete story about Dr. Beatse will appear in next week's edition.

In my opinion

Working to slow water, silt runoff to the lake

By Mary Pat O'Connor
CONTRIBUTOR

The Delavan Lake Improvement Association, Walworth County Conservation and private lakefront property owner are working together to slow water and silt runoff from upland farms to the lake.

The DLIA is an organization that advocates for clean water quality in Delavan Lake. Our lake is challenged due to the enormous size (over 24,000 acres) of the watershed and abundant cropland within its boundaries.

On July 12, 2017, Walworth County experienced multiple rounds of rain and flash flooding causing Delavan Lake to receive major amounts of sediment runoff. Property owners, Jay and Cindy Longbottom, who live on South Shore Drive, witnessed this runoff and were aware of the considerable sediment that enters the lake during lesser storms.

Because Jay experienced the consequences of runoff, including eutrophication, on a lake in Minnesota during his youth, he recognized the risks for Delavan Lake and began taking steps to

investigate.

"I learned about efforts to manage the Delavan Lake watershed and reduce damaging runoff through the DLIA and was pleased to hear that Walworth County was taking an active role in this effort," according to Longbottom.

The DLIA partners with Brian Smetana of the Walworth County Conservation Department to identify farmers willing to establish cover crop, buffers and water control basins to help reduce cropland runoff. In this case, Brian's task was to educate and convince the property owner and the operator of the farmland directly east of South Shore Drive to work with us developing a system to reduce sediment released from this spot.

Shortly thereafter, a meeting took place at the Walworth County office to discuss a project on private property directly east of South Shore Drive off County F. Brian developed a plan which consisted of the construction of a water control basin, waterway and a separate pond.

In addition, the property owner agreed to allow a

buffer around the basins for native plants including pollinators. This project was funded by private & public funds and individual contributions with no cost to the landowner who allowed the construction of these water control practices on their land.

After completion of the project, Mr. Longbottom noticed the improvement.

"The benefits of the work were immediately visible, and I hope more projects like this can be completed as they will definitely protect landowners' property from run-off damage and improve the lake water quality," he said.

This is one of the largest and most successful watershed projects the DLIA has participated in since starting its partnership with Walworth County Land Use & Resource Management Department.

As we continue to experience heavy rains and challenging weather conditions it becomes more important than ever to maintain a balance between soil and water. The DLIA is committed to finding new and improved ways to control sediment carrying

phosphorous into Delavan Lake.

If you notice a runoff situation in your neighborhood, please feel free to contact the Delavan Lake Improvement Association to see if we can help.

Together we can improve and maintain a clean, healthy and prosperous lake.

Mary Pat O'Connor is the president of the Delavan Lake Improvement Association. The DLIA is entirely funded by membership and donations from the public and is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. For more information visit the website at www.delavan-lake.org.

Letter to the editor

Memorial Day meaningful thanks to many

On behalf of Delavan's American Legion Post Commander and Master of Ceremonies, LTC John Loomer, as well as Memorial Day Chairman Len Hahn, we would like to thank all who made Memorial Day 2019 a very successful event.

The weather was perfect for a parade, rain threatened but held off until after the

parade and ceremonies.

We would like to give special thanks to the Delavan-Darien High School Band and their director Nick Stark, along with buglers Erik Penniman and Myles Lockhart.

Our guest speaker State Senator Stephan Nass did an excellent job as he honored those who gave their lives for our liberties and freedom.

We also would like to thank our Auxiliary Vice

President, Connie Lindloff and Emma Nieuwenhuis, our Poppy Princess, as they honored each veteran that was called to their eternal rest this year.

We would also like to thank Rev. Micah Schlobohm from Delavan's UCC Church, for the invocation of our ceremonies as well as De Drymalski who signed for the deaf.

See THANKS, Page 9

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