

State Elected Officials' Compensation

Salaries for the governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, state auditor, secretary of state, judges, and legislators are established by state law or by the legislature, depending on the position.

Salaries for constitutional officers

As required by the Minnesota Constitution, salaries for constitutional officers are prescribed by law. [Art. V](#), § 4.

The 2013 Legislature passed legislation increasing the governor's salary by 3 percent on January 1, 2015, and by 3 percent on January 1, 2016. [Laws 2013, ch. 142](#), art. 6, § 12. Salaries of the other constitutional officers are a specified percentage of the governor's salary, so salaries of the other constitutional officers increased by 3 percent in 2015 and 3 percent in 2016. [Laws 2001, 1st spec. sess., ch. 10](#), art. 1, § 2.

Officer	% of Governor's Salary	2016 Salary
Governor	---	\$127,629
Attorney General	95%	\$121,248
State Auditor	85%	\$108,485
Secretary of State	75%	\$95,722
Lt. Governor	65%	\$82,959

The governor can veto legislation establishing compensation for constitutional officers because, according to the constitution, the compensation is set "by law."

Salaries for judges

The Minnesota Constitution stipulates that the legislature must establish compensation for judges and that judges' salaries cannot be reduced while they are in office. [Art. VI](#), § 5. The most recent salary increases for judges were 4 percent on July 1, 2015. Judges' salaries will increase another 4 percent on July 1, 2016. These increases were funded in [Laws 2015, chapter 65](#), article 1, sections 2, 3, and 4. Annual salaries for various judges are as follows:

Official	July 2015 Salary	July 2016 Salary
Supreme Court, chief	\$178,892	\$186,048
Supreme Court, justice	\$162,630	\$169,135
Court of Appeals, chief	\$160,900	\$167,336
Court of Appeals, judge	\$153,240	\$159,370
District Court, chief	\$151,042	\$157,084
District Court, judge	\$143,851	\$149,605

The constitutional provisions governing judges have been interpreted to mean that the governor may not veto provisions setting judges' compensation because their compensation is prescribed "by the legislature." *Gardner v. Holm*, 241 Minn. 125, 62 N.W. 2d 52 (1954).

Salaries for legislators

The Minnesota Constitution provides that legislators' compensation is set by law. The annual salary for representatives and senators is \$31,140. The House and the Senate each can designate three leadership positions to receive up to 140 percent of the compensation of other members of the legislature (this is an additional \$12,456 per year).

The most recent salary increase for legislators was 5 percent in January 1999. The constitution also says that "no increase of compensation shall take effect during the period for which the members of the existing House of Representatives may have been elected." [Art. IV](#), § 9. Because the constitution says that legislators' salaries are set "by law," the governor can veto legislation setting legislators' compensation.

The 2013 Legislature proposed a constitutional amendment regarding how legislators' salaries are determined. The 2014 Legislature modified the text of the proposed amendment and passed a bill that put that amendment to voters. The amendment will be voted on at the 2016 general election. [Laws 2013, ch. 124](#); [Laws 2014, ch. 282](#). If the amendment is adopted, salaries for legislators will be established by a newly created council, called the Legislative Salary Council, with members appointed by the governor and the chief justice of the Supreme Court.

The Compensation Council's role in establishing salaries

The legislature established a 16-member Compensation Council to assist it in establishing the compensation of constitutional officers and judges. [Minn. Stat. § 15A.082](#). In 2014, the legislature removed the council's authority to make recommendations for legislators. Members of the Compensation Council are appointed in January of each odd-numbered year. The council must make its recommendations to the legislature by April 15 of that year.

By law, the council's recommendations take effect if an appropriation to pay the recommended salaries is enacted after the recommendations are submitted and before their effective date. As a practical matter, when the legislature has increased salaries, it generally has done so either by expressly adopting or modifying Compensation Council recommendations or by establishing percentages in law without reference to Compensation Council recommendations.

Insurance benefits and pension plans

Constitutional officers, legislators, and judges all are members of the state employee group insurance plan and receive the same insurance benefits as state employees.

Most legislators (all who were first elected after July 1, 1997, and some elected before then) and all constitutional officers are members of a defined contribution pension plan. Under this plan, the member contributes 5.5 percent of his or her salary and the state contributes 6 percent. This money is invested, and upon leaving state service, the elected official is eligible to receive whatever money is in the account.

Judges belong to a defined benefit pension plan, in which the benefit is determined by multiplying years of service times a service-credit percentage and applying this percentage to the judge's average high-five years of salary.

For more information: Contact legislative analyst Mark Shepard at 651-296-5051. For historical information on elected officials' salaries, see the Legislative Coordinating Commission's website: <http://www.ser.leg.mn/salaries/electedsalaries130620.pdf>.

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