



Wisconsin Facts from the

LEGISLATIVE
REFERENCE
BUREAU

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THE SPEAKER OF THE ASSEMBLY IN WISCONSIN

History of the Position

The Speaker has been the presiding officer of the Assembly since Wisconsin became a state in 1848. Until 1959 he was the sole official selected to preside over the Assembly, but in that year provision was made for a Speaker Pro Tempore to preside when the Speaker is absent.

Most Speakers have served only a single term, but 11 have served 2 consecutive terms. Only one, former Governor Vernon W. Thomson, was Speaker for 3 consecutive terms although Frederick W. Horn served in 1851, again in 1854, and again 21 years later in 1875. Three former Speakers were elected to serve in the 1967 Legislature: Paul R. Alfonsi who served as Speaker in the 1937 Session, George Molinaro who served as Speaker in 1959 and 1960, and Robert T. Huber who served as Speaker in 1965 and 1966. Thirty-six of the 72 counties have provided Speakers for the Assembly with the Speaker coming from Milwaukee County 7 times, from Rock County 6 times, from Walworth County 5 times and from Grant, La Crosse and Richland Counties 4 times. The records disclose that only one Speaker failed to serve out his term. In 1925 the Speaker resigned after the session to accept an appointment as a circuit judge, and a new Speaker was selected at a subsequent special session.

While many well-known men have been Speakers of the Assembly, only one, Vernon W. Thomson became Governor. Two former Speakers have been elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, one to the U.S. Senate and one became Lieutenant Governor.

Speakers of the Assembly 1848-1967

Legislature	Name	County	Legislative Sessions Served in	Sessions in Leg. prior to Election as Speaker
1848	Ninian E. Whitesides	Lafayette	1848	---
1849	Harrison C. Hobart	Sheboygan	1849;59;67	none
1850	Moses M. Strong	Iowa	1850;57	none
1851	Frederick W. Horn	Washington	1851	none
1852	James M. Shafter	Sheboygan	1852	none
1853	Henry L. Palmer	Milwaukee	1853;60;62;73	none
1854	Frederick W. Horn	Ozaukee	1854;57;59;60	1
1855	Charles C. Sholes	Kenosha	1855	none
1856	William Hull	Grant	1854;55;56	2
1857	Wyman Spooner	Walworth	1850;51;57;61	2
1858	Frederick S. Lovell	Kenosha	1857;58	1
1859	William P. Lyon	Racine	1859;60	none
1860	William P. Lyon	Racine	"	---
1861	Amasa Cobb	Iowa	1860;61	none
1862	James W. Beardsley	Pierce	1862	none
1863	J. Allen Barber	Grant	1852;53;63;64	2
1864	William W. Field	Grant	1855;62;63;64	3
1865	William W. Field	Grant	1865;71	---
1866	Henry D. Barron	Polk	1863;64;66	2
1867	Angus Cameron	La Crosse	1866-67	1
1868	Alexander M. Thomson	Rock	1868;69	none
1869	Alexander M. Thomson	Rock	"	---

(Over)

Legislature	Name	County	Legislative Sessions Served in	Sessions in Leg. Prior to Election as Speaker
1870	James M. Bingham	Jefferson	1863;64;69;70;74	3
1871	William E. Smith	Dodge	1851;71	1
1872	Daniel Hall	Jefferson	1870;71;72	2
1873	Henry D. Barron	Polk	1867;68;69;72;73	4
1874	Gabe Bouck	Winnebago	1860;74	1
1875	Frederick W. Horn	Ozaukee	1867;68;72;75	3
1876	Sam S. Fifield	Ashland	1874;75;76	2
1877	John B. Cassoday	Rock	1865;1877	1
1878	Augustus R. Barrows	Chippewa	1878	none
1879	David M. Kelly	Brown	1877;78;79	2
1880	Alexander A. Arnold	Trempealeau	1871;1880	1
1881	Ira B. Bradford	Eau Claire	1880;1881;1903	1
1882	Franklin L. Gilson	Pierce	1881;1882	1
1883	Earl P. Finch	Winnebago	1883	none
1885	Hiram O. Fairchild	Marinette	1883;1885	1
1887	Thomas B. Mills	Jackson	1885;87;89	1
1889	Thomas B. Mills	Jackson	"	---
1891	James J. Hogan	La Crosse	1889;91	1
1893	Edward Keogh	Milwaukee	1860;61;76-82;87-93	12
1895	George B. Burrows	Dane	1895	none
1897	George A. Buckstaff	Winnebago	1895;97	1
1899	George H. Ray	La Crosse	1895-1903	2
1901	George H. Ray	La Crosse	"	2
1903	Irvine L. Lenroot	Douglas	1901-1905	2
1905	Irvine L. Lenroot	Douglas	"	2
1907	Herman L. Ekern	Trempealeau	1903-1907	2
1909	L. H. Bancroft	Richland	1907;1909	1
1911	C. A. Ingram	Pepin	1907;09;11	2
1913	Merlin Hull	Jackson	1909;11;13	2
1915	Lawrence C. Whittet	Rock	1909;15;17	1
1917	Lawrence C. Whittet	Rock	"	---
1919	Riley S. Young	Walworth	1917;19;21	1
1921	Riley S. Young	Walworth	"	---
1923	John L. Dahl	Barron	1921;23	1
1925	Herman Sachtjen*	Dane	1921;23;25	2
1927	John W. Eber	Milwaukee	1923-31	2
1929	Charles B. Perry	Milwaukee	1923-37	3
1931	Charles B. Perry	Milwaukee	"	---
1933	Cornelius T. Young	Milwaukee	1931-37	1
1935	Jorge W. Carow	Rusk	1929-35	3
1937	Paul R. Alfonsi	Iron & Vilas	1933-39;1959-67	2
1939	Vernon W. Thomson	Richland	1935-49	2
1941	Vernon W. Thomson	Richland	"	---
1943	Vernon W. Thomson	Richland	"	---
1945	Donald C. McDowell	Crawford	1937-47	3
1947	Donald C. McDowell	Crawford	"	---
1949	Alex L. Nicol	Monroe	1939-49	5
1951	Ora R. Rice	Walworth	1937-59	6
1953	Ora R. Rice	Walworth	"	---
1955	Mark Catlin, Jr.	Outagamie	1937-43;49;53;55	3
1957	Robert G. Marotz	Shawano	1949-57	4
1959	George Molinaro	Kenosha	1947-67	5
1961	David J. Blanchard	Rock	1955-61	3
1963	Robert D. Haase	Marinette	1957-63	3
1965	Robert T. Huber	Milwaukee	1949-57	7
1967	Harold V. Froehlich	Outagamie	1963-65	2

*George A. Nelson (1921-25), Polk County, elected to serve at special session 4/15/26 because of appointment of Herman Sachtjen as circuit judge.