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June 19, 2023

Public Employee Pay Series: Legislative Compensation

Average Compensation of Louisiana Lawmakers Nears \$44,000

A Louisiana House committee rejected a proposal to raise legislators' salaries in the just-ended legislative session, but debates over the compensation rates are expected to continue in the next term since state lawmakers' base pay hasn't changed since 1980.

Before this latest failed effort, lawmakers last tried to raise their own pay in 2008. But Gov. Bobby Jindal vetoed the salary hike bill.

Each legislator receives a \$16,800 salary, plus expense allowances and per diem for meetings and legislative session days. Legislative leaders and certain committee chairs also have higher base salaries, meaning that what lawmakers take home varies.

The average salary of all Louisiana legislators was \$43,776 in 2022, according to [financial reports](#) filed with the legislative auditor's office. Members received a per diem of \$160 for every day they were in session and a mileage allowance of 58 cents per mile for trips to and from the Capitol during session, according to the reports.



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Legislative Base Salaries Across Southern States



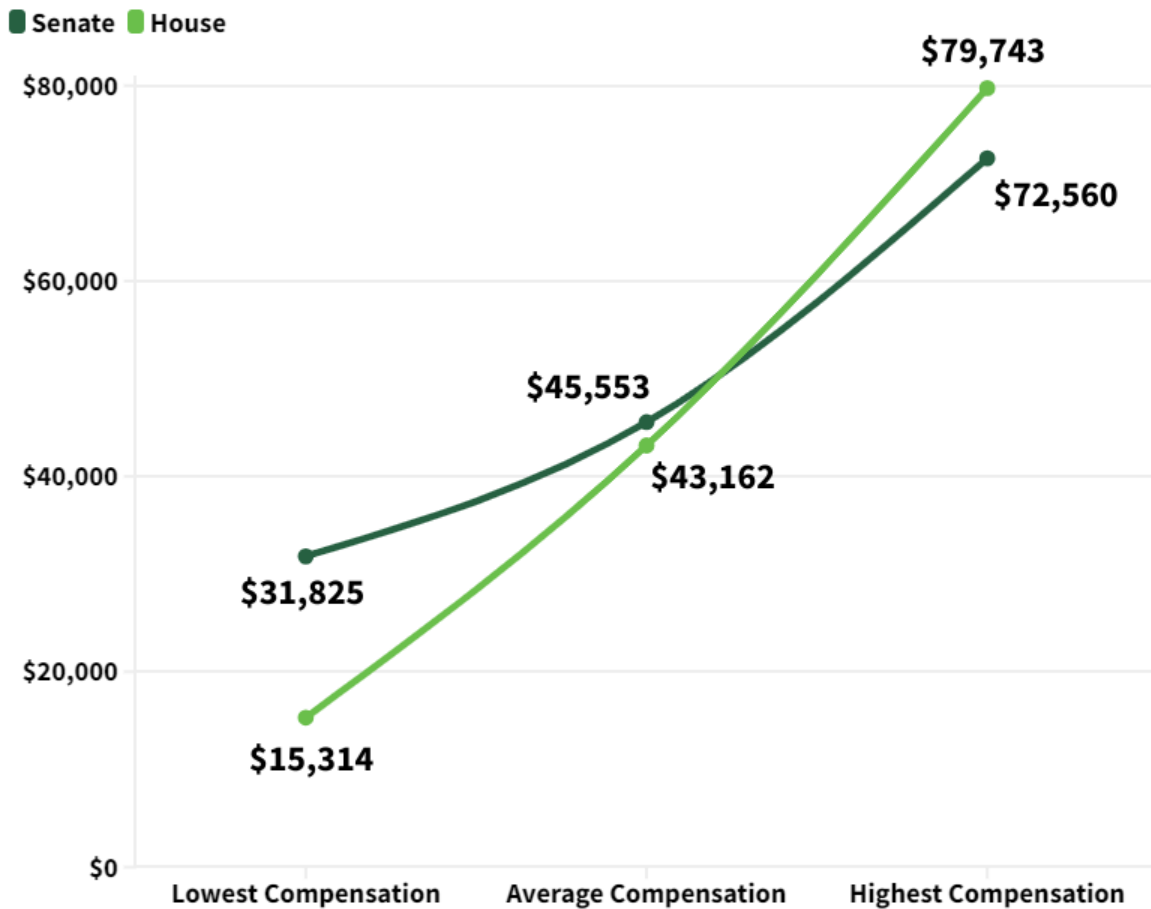
Source: National Conference of State Legislatures, [2022 Legislator Compensation](#)

When comparing the compensation of legislators across Southern states, it appears that Louisiana lawmakers are some of the lowest paid. However, the graph above shows only the base salary of legislators and does not include per diem or other allowances given. For example, Texas has the lowest base legislative salary of \$7,200, but when per diem is included, Texas lawmakers receive an additional \$30,940. Each state calculates per diem differently and has specific travel allowances that impact the total salary lawmakers receive.



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Highest, Average and Lowest Compensation of LA Legislators



Source: Financial Reports Filed with Louisiana Legislative Auditor's Office, June 2022

When reviewing the compensation by chamber, Louisiana state senators made \$45,553 on average in 2022, about \$2,400 more than state representatives' average salary of \$43,162 in the same year, according to the legislative [financial reports](#).

The House had both the highest and lowest salaries last year with one lawmaker receiving \$79,743 and another making \$15,314.

Lawmakers in leadership positions make a little less than double the base salary of \$16,800. Set by [state law](#), the speaker of the House and president of the Senate make \$32,000 annually in



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addition to the per diem and other allowances that all members of the Legislature receive. The second-ranking members of the House and Senate also get a slightly higher salary than other lawmakers.

The chairman and vice chairman of the powerful Joint Legislative Committee on the Budget also receive a higher salary that must remain below the base pay of the speaker and president, but their frequent budget meetings often push their total compensation to levels higher than the top-ranking leaders. In 2022, the chairman and vice chairman of the budget committee made \$6,000 more than the speaker of the House and president of the Senate.

Part 1 of a four-part series addressing public employee compensation in Louisiana.