

# Assembly hikes pay for many employees, including highest-paid

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## STATE ASSEMBLY'S TOP EARNERS

When the Assembly gave its full-time staff \$1.2 million in raises last year, most of the highest-paid employees received 4 percent raises.

Employee	Title	Assembly office	Salary Jan. 2014	Percent raise from Jan. 2013 salary
Greg C. Campbell	Chief of staff	Speaker John A. Pérez	\$197,604	4%
Christopher W. Woods	Chief consultant	Democratic Caucus	\$193,476	0
Jonathon J. Waldie	Chief admin. officer	Rules Committee	\$188,448	4%
Gus M. Dernas	Fiscal officer	Rules Committee	\$185,892	4%
Richard H. Simpson	Chief consultant	Democratic Caucus	\$183,876	4%
Arnold Milton Sowell	Chief consultant	Democratic Caucus	\$183,876	4%
Geoffrey L. Long	Chief consultant	Mike Gatto, Appropriations Committee	\$182,628	4%
Fredericka L.M. McGee*	Speaker's legal counsel	Democratic Caucus	\$181,200	10%
Edward D. Wilson	Chief Clerk	Chief Clerk	\$179,892	4%
Christian F. Griffith	Chief consultant	Nancy Skinner, Budget Committee	\$176,112	0
David L. Sebeck	Chief consultant	Democratic Caucus	\$171,084	4%
Deborah K. Gonzalez*	Chief of staff	Republican Caucus	\$170,004	6.2%
Diane Marie Griffiths*	Chief of staff	Nancy Skinner, Budget Committee	\$169,428	4%
Lynda Roper-Ayala	Deputy admin. officer	Rules Committee	\$161,904	4%
Richard C. Mersereau	Chief consultant	Republican Caucus	\$160,056	0

Source: California State Assembly; Bee research

\*Employee received promotion or additional duties in 2013.

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## SACRAMENTO

- BY THE NUMBERS

Jan. 31, 2014

**Assembly:** 1,282 employees, \$71.4 million payroll (excludes 51 hourly workers)

**Senate:** 992 employees, \$69.5 million payroll

Mid-2011

**Assembly (May 2011):** 1,178 employees, \$69.7 million payroll (excludes 28 hourly workers)

**Senate: (July 2011): 972 employees, \$64.4 million payroll**

As the California economy continued its recovery and state revenue grew last year, the Assembly awarded about \$1.2 million in raises to a quarter of its full-time employees, including some of its highest-paid staffers, salary records show.

Senate raises were few and far between in 2013. But the payroll for both houses is up about 3 percent from mid-2011, when California was still early in its climb out of the Great Recession.

As of Jan. 31, the Assembly had 1,181 non-hourly employees and a payroll of \$71.4 million annually, an increase of about 2.5 percent over May 2011, according to legislative records. The Senate's Jan. 31 payroll was \$67.5 million for 992 employees, a 5 percent increase from its July 2011 payroll.

Assembly officials said the 2013 raises, most of which range from 4 to 6 percent, were given to employees who had not received raises in recent years. They reflected efforts to prevent the loss of talented employees for better-paying jobs in other branches of government or the private sector, officials said.

"You have to, at some point, look at a staff-retention issue," said Jon Waldie, the Assembly's chief administrative officer. "We're trying to be competitive without being fiscally irresponsible."

State finances have improved significantly since 2012, with tax proceeds for the current fiscal year running about \$1 billion ahead of estimates.

After a series of cuts, California lawmakers received a 5 percent pay bump in December, bringing their base pay to \$95,291. They could get another boost this spring that would bring them closer to the \$110,800 base pay they earned before the recession.

That's also when the Brown administration will decide whether the state's balance sheet justifies a 2 percent raise for many of the state's 180,000 rank-and-file state employees, who faced furlough-caused drops in their pay during the recession.

Yet the finances of many households have stagnated. California's 2012 median family income of \$66,215 marks the fifth straight year of inflation-adjusted decreases, according to the U.S. Census's most recent American Community Survey.

Rhys Williams, a spokesman for Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg, D-Sacramento, said Senate salaries have remained largely unchanged since 2007. The drought temporarily ended in 2011-12, when the Senate awarded \$1.5 million worth of merit raises of up to 5 percent for hundreds of employees whose performance was reviewed on the month of their birthday.

Notwithstanding the birthday bump, the Senate has had a hard time keeping staff, Williams said. He pointed to the departures of several longtime Senate employees, such as the Senate budget

committee's top staffer Keely Bosler, who last fall joined Brown's Department of Finance and received a 30 percent increase in pay.

"In real terms, Senate employees' spending power is much less than it was in 2007," Williams said. "The policies were put in place as part of sharing the burden of the Great Recession."

Jon Coupal, president of the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association, said he was not particularly sympathetic to such concerns.

"Welcome to the private sector. In the private sector people are just happy to hang on to their jobs," Coupal said, adding of legislative jobs: "It's a good gig if you can get it."

But Williams and others say California residents would be ill-served by "a race to the bottom" in legislative salaries. With many lawmakers relatively new to the Capitol, experienced staff can provide a counterweight to lobbyists or executive branch officials.

"After they've been in the Legislature a while, that's a skill set that's hard to find," said Tim Storey, a legislative analyst with the National Conference of State Legislatures.

No one tracks the pay of the roughly 27,000 full-time legislative staff jobs nationwide. The legislature conference, however, conducts salary surveys for member legislatures that ask. There are multiple signs that pay increases are on the table, Storey said.

"It's been really crazy the last two or three months. We're knee-deep in salary comparison surveys." Storey said. "I wouldn't say that the floodgates have opened, but there is definitely some rain. Clearly the market has improved."

In California, legislative spending is controlled by Proposition 140. The 1990 measure that imposed the state's first legislative term limits also includes a formula that increases the Legislature's budget in most years to reflect growth in population and cost of living. The Legislature's budget is scheduled to be \$268 million in 2014-15, the same amount as 2013-14, but an increase of almost 5 percent from 2012-13.

Some lawmakers publicly tout efforts to limit their offices' spending. Since 2011-12, the Assembly has stayed below the Proposition 140 ceiling and donated about 15 percent of the money to chosen state agencies and programs, such as \$2 million for the California Arts Council in the current budget. The Senate has not taken about \$13 million in allowable increases since 2008, Senate officials say.

The vast majority of the Assembly's 82 job classifications work in lawmakers' Capitol and district offices and for lawmaker-led committees. Other employees work in administration, security and other posts.

Assembly pay records show there were about 690 employees on the payroll earlier this year who had the same position in early 2013. Of those, about 275 received raises totaling \$1.2 million.

Almost all of the increases ranged from 4 percent to 6 percent, with about a third of the money going to positions with annual salaries of less than \$50,000.

About a quarter of the money went to the 12 percent of workers who earned more than \$100,000 as of January 2013, including raises for all but a handful of the Assembly's 20 highest-paid employees. Among those was a 10 percent increase for Fredericka McGee, the special counsel for Assembly Speaker John A. Pérez. Waldie said McGee also has assumed the duties of deputy chief of staff.

More than 200 other Assembly employees received promotions totaling about \$1.6 million annually, records show.

The Senate had more than 100 job classifications as of January, with most working for a senator or legislative committee.

About 20 Senate employees kept the same job classification in 2013 and received pay hikes totaling more than \$130,000. But Williams said those reflected changes to new positions, more responsibilities, increased hours or other reasons – not merit raises or cost-of-living adjustments of the type given in 2011-12.

Another 80 Senate employees assumed higher-paying jobs during 2013, totaling about a half-million dollars annually. Among those were employees of state Sen. Ron Calderon, D-Montebello, who was indicted on federal corruption charges in February.

Federal investigators searched Calderon's Capitol office last June. His then-chief of staff, Rocky Rushing, soon transferred to another Senate office. Sometime in July, the Senate approved about \$37,000 worth of staff promotions triggered by Rushing's departure.

There are no plans for Senate raises in 2014, Williams said. Of Assembly employees, Waldie said: "I'm sure there are some people who will get raises this year."

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