

# RESEARCH BRIEFS

Brief #23

Fall 2011

## Wisconsin Teacher Salaries

Data from the National Education Association show that the average salary for Wisconsin teachers dropped to 23<sup>rd</sup> nationally in 2010, down from 21<sup>st</sup> the prior year. Wisconsin teacher pay fell to the lowest level in 50 years compared to other teachers nationally. The average salary, which includes annual step increases for longevity and lane changes for educational attainment, was \$51,264. Fifty-two percent of Wisconsin teachers hold master's degrees and the average teacher has 16 years experience.

Once ranked 15<sup>th</sup>, teacher pay was capped in 1993 and has fallen ever since. Where teachers once received 103 percent of the national average in pay, they now receive only 93 percent.

Rank of Average Salaries for Wisconsin Teachers				
Year	RANK	WI	Nat.	% Nat. Avg
92-93	<b>15</b>	\$35,926	\$35,000	<b>102.6%</b>
93-94	<b>16</b>	\$35,990	\$35,972	<b>100.1%</b>
94-95	<b>16</b>	\$37,746	\$36,605	<b>103.1%</b>
95-96	<b>15</b>	\$38,182	\$37,685	<b>101.3%</b>
96-97	<b>15</b>	\$39,057	\$38,611	<b>101.2%</b>
97-98	<b>15</b>	\$39,357	\$39,477	<b>99.7%</b>
98-99	<b>16</b>	\$40,657	\$40,582	<b>100.2%</b>
99-00	<b>16</b>	\$41,153	\$41,754	<b>98.6%</b>
00-01	<b>20</b>	\$42,122	\$43,400	<b>97.1%</b>
01-02	<b>22</b>	\$42,232	\$44,632	<b>94.6%</b>
02-03	<b>21</b>	\$42,775	\$45,776	<b>93.4%</b>
03-04	<b>23</b>	\$42,882	\$46,704	<b>91.8%</b>
04-05	<b>22</b>	\$44,299	\$47,674	<b>92.9%</b>
05-06	<b>21</b>	\$46,390	\$49,026	<b>94.6%</b>
06-07	<b>20</b>	\$47,901	\$50,716	<b>94.4%</b>
07-08	<b>21</b>	\$49,051	\$52,105	<b>94.1%</b>
08-09	<b>21</b>	\$51,121	\$54,333	<b>94.1%</b>
09-10	<b>23</b>	\$51,264	\$55,202	<b>92.9%</b>

Source: NEA Rankings and Estimates 2010

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Starting pay in Wisconsin, which lands at \$33,800, lost 5 percent to inflation, so that new teachers today earn \$1,225 dollars less than they did in 1992. Wisconsin ranks 30<sup>th</sup> nationally on starting pay, lower than teachers in Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, and Minnesota in the Midwest. Teachers in general have the lowest starting pay of any profession requiring a college degree.

Since pay caps were imposed in 1993, salaries for Wisconsin teachers have not kept up with inflation, per capita income, household median income, and teacher pay nationally.

## **Purchasing power is losing ground to inflation**

In the last decade, real earnings for Wisconsin teachers *declined* by 2.3 percent. Wisconsin ranked 46<sup>th</sup> nationally in salary change, with 45 states experiencing larger increases in income. To compare, Wyoming saw the largest increase at 28 percent, while the average gain in teacher pay nationally the last ten years came in at 3.5 percent.<sup>1</sup>

Since 1993, teacher salaries lost a total of 9 percent to inflation, as purchasing power fell behind the cost of living. With caps imposed on total compensation, salaries were forced down as health costs went up.

Stated another way, teachers need to earn an additional \$3,280 today in order to have the same purchasing power they did in 1993.

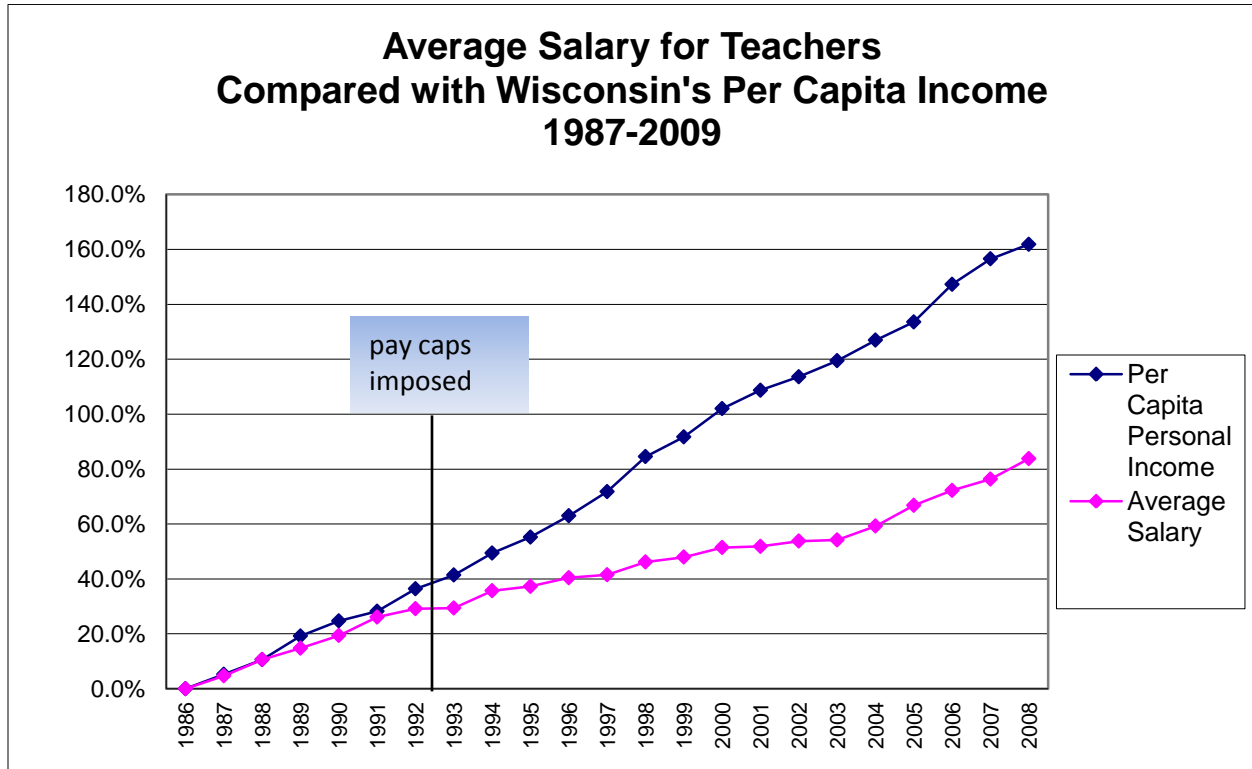
## **Household median income**

Median income in Wisconsin increased 61.3 percent between 1993 and 2009. In contrast, teacher pay increased 42.3 percent during the same time period.<sup>2</sup>

## **Wisconsin's per capita income increased at twice the rate of teacher pay**

In the graph below, teacher pay kept pace with increases in Wisconsin's per capita income prior to 1993. Per capita income measures the income of all public and private sector workers in the state. After 1993, per capita income rose at a much faster rate than teacher pay. All told, since 1986, per capita income increased 162 percent—about twice the 84 percent gain experienced by Wisconsin's teachers.<sup>3</sup>

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## Conclusion

The declining economic status of Wisconsin teachers threatens the long-term quality of public education in the state. Unless Wisconsin can attract and retain qualified teachers, the first-rate education offered to today's students will become a thing of the past.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> National Education Association, "Rankings and Estimates 2010-2011," December 2010.

<sup>2</sup> U.S Census Bureau, <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/income/data/statemedian/index.html>

<sup>3</sup> Bureau of Economic Analysis, <http://www.bea.gov/regional/spi/>.