

The Capital Times April 10, 2004

# Audit sought of DNR vehicle purchases

**By Anita Weier***The Capital Times*

A state senator is questioning Department of Natural Resources fleet purchases in light of a report that the DNR's northern region has been buying vehicles at a costly clip despite state budget problems.

Sen. Robert Cowles, R-Green Bay, has called for an audit of state fleet purchases and organization in light of a report in the Lakeland Times newspaper that the northern region of the DNR paid \$10.4 million to buy new vehicles and doubled the size of its fleet in the past 10 years.

The Department of Administration has been studying the overall state fleet situation and has planned consolidations of fleet management programs, but Cowles wants faster action.

The state of Wisconsin maintains more than 7,000 vehicles, which are divided into four fleets operated by the Department of Administration, Department of Transportation, DNR and the University of Wis-

consin-Madison, according to Cowles. The Department of Corrections and the Department of Health and Family Services operate smaller fleets.

Cowles questioned DNR purchases of expensive fuel-inefficient vehicles such as trucks and sport utility vehicles. And he noted that the DOA central fleet operates at a much lower cost per mile — 24 cents — than the overall state fleet cost of 37 cents per mile. Millions could be saved by consolidating the fleet so that the DNR and other agencies could match the DOA's cost statistics, he said.

But Vance Rayburn, administrator of the DNR's Customer and Employee Service Division, which manages its fleet, said that the agency's 1,561-vehicle fleet has many specialty vehicles — such as fire control vehicles, dump trucks and vehicles used to transport fish.

"It's not a fleet of passenger cars and light trucks. It's difficult to compare the Department of Administration fleet

with an agency like DNR," Rayburn said. "That would be like comparing Avis to the Madison Fire Department."

Rayburn said the 10-year total for the northern region for vehicle acquisition was \$8.5 million, not \$10 million, for the period from 1993 through 2003.

He also said that the northern region's fleet actually shrank during the last five years because 251 vehicles were disposed of while 239 were purchased. Disposal figures were only available for the last five years, he said.

"For the whole state, over the five-year period, the fleet grew slightly," Rayburn added. There were 881 vehicle purchases and 896 disposals.

The DNR reduced the number of passenger cars in its fleet in response to a directive by former Gov. Scott McCallum, he said.

"For the whole state, DNR acquisition costs in the last five years were \$19.8 million. The 10-year acquisition cost was

...cont. next page

**The Capital Times April 10, 2004**

...cont. from prev. page

\$30.6 million," Rayburn said. But disposals brought in income of \$3.6 million for the past five years, which brings the net cost down, he added.

Rayburn also said that the DNR exceeds DOA mileage guidelines before it replaces light trucks and passenger cars. Those guidelines are

90,000 miles for light trucks and vans and 85,000 for cars, he said.

E-mail: aweier@madison.com

## DNR vehicle report

Year	DNR Purchases	Cars	Light Trucks	Heavy Trucks	SUV	Acquisition Cost
2003	32	14	0	18	0	\$1,694,197
2002	277	74	164	11	28	\$ 6,114,911
2001	203	50	104	7	42	\$4,249,469
2000	183	50	107	15	11	\$3,849,329
1999	186	49	113	13	11	\$3,901,649
1998	154	34	103	1	16	\$3,129,691
1997	89	19	54	7	9	\$1,935,940
1996	78	10	50	11	7	\$1,698,612
1995	33	2	21	3	7	\$717,238
1994	95	1	71	18	5	\$2,115,812
1993	55	0	40	14	1	\$1,191,277
<b>5 year total</b>	<b>881</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>488</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>\$19,809,555</b>
<b>10 year total</b>	<b>1,385</b>	<b>303</b>	<b>827</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>\$30,598,125</b>

Source: DNR

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel April 10, 2004

# Most state-car logs lacked personal use

## Agency heads asked to ensure that all mileage being reported accurately

By **PATRICK MARLEY,**  
**STEVEN WALTERS**  
and **STACY FORSTER**  
pmarley@journalsentinel.com

**Madison** — Six out of 10 state employees with state cars reported that they did not log any personal miles during a 14-month period, according to records released Friday.

In all, the records show that more than 1,700 vehicles are personally assigned to employees and about 1,100 of them, or more than 60%, had no personal miles reported from January 2003 to February 2004.

A small number of the cars included in the report were assigned to an office and shared by several employees.

Among major departments, the Department of Transportation had the lowest reimbursement rate, with more than three-fourths of the employees paying no personal mileage, according to the records obtained by the Journal Sentinel through a request under the state's open records law.

More than 100 state workers reported driving more than 20,000 miles during that period without putting any personal miles on their vehicles.

In response to the figures, the Department of Administra-

tion sent a letter to all agency heads this week, asking them to double-check to ensure that all mileage is being reported accurately, Administration Secretary Marc Marotta said.

He noted that some cars, although assigned to someone, are kept at an office and used only for business. It remains unclear how many vehicles are treated that way, he said.

### More than 100

state workers reported driving more than 20,000 miles from January 2003 to February 2004 without putting any personal miles on their state vehicles.

"Until we look into it further to see if people are using it for personal mileage, I'll hold my reaction in abeyance," Marotta said.

If problems are found, disciplinary action will be handed down, he said.

Gov. Jim Doyle was critical of Attorney General Peg Lautenschlager when questions were raised about her mileage logs, which show she put nearly 20,000 miles on her state car last year, none of them personal.

That landed Lautenschlager and top aide Dan Bach in trouble last month, when the state Ethics Board ordered them to

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel April 10, 2004
---

...cont. from prev. page

reimburse the state for personal miles and slapped them with \$250 fines.

The governor will not tolerate any misuse of state cars, Marotta said.

Dan Leistikow, a spokesman for Doyle, said the governor has made it clear that he expects people to follow the policy and reimburse the state for any personal miles they drive with a state-owned car.

"It's clear that over the years, there's been a lot of sloppy record-keeping, and the governor has made it very clear that it's a new day," Leistikow said. "Taxpayers expect more of us. These policies are going to have to be followed very closely and to the extent that people have personal miles, those have to be reimbursed."

Leistikow said a review of all state cars was already under way when Lautenschlager was arrested for drunken driving and the revelations about her use of the state car emerged. The Department of Administration was looking at how the cars are used and whether some of them could be

eliminated to save taxpayer dollars, he said.

As a result of the review, the state has already reduced the number of personally assigned vehicles by more than 80 cars, "and once it is complete, it will go even further than that," Leistikow said.

State rules allow employees with official vehicles to use them for incidental personal errands — stopping at an automated teller machine while on the job, for example. Any other personal miles must be reimbursed, however.

#### Audit requested

Sen. Robert Cowles (R-Green Bay) said Friday that he was shocked at the high percentage of state workers whose logs indicated they did not drive any personal miles.

"It's hard for me to comprehend that all those people aren't claiming any personal miles," said Cowles, who this week requested an audit of the Department of Natural Resources' vehicle purchases.

Cowles called on Doyle and Marotta to fix the problem and said he would expand his audit request to include the use of all state vehicles.

"This thing begs for some major management restructuring," Cowles said.

At the Department of Transportation, 389 of 506, or 77%, of employees with cars did not reimburse the state. For a variety of other agencies under the Department of Administration, 568 of 893, or 64%, did not reimburse, and at the Department of Natural Resources, 135 of 313, or 43%, of employees did not reimburse.

The state also provided information on vehicles used by the Department of Corrections, but those records do not address whether employees paid personal mileage on the vehicles. Most cars the University of Wisconsin System owns were not included in the records, but they did include information on six chancellors.

Two of those six — recently deceased UW-River Falls Chancellor Ann Lydecker and UW-Green Bay Chancellor Bruce Shepard — reported no personal mileage on the state-owned cars that they each put 22,000 miles on during that period. That contrasts sharply with the other chancellors, who reimbursed the state \$608 to \$1,600 during that period.

One state employee who logged a significant number of miles without paying for any

personal use was Bryce Luchterhand, director of the governor's northern office. Doyle spokesman Leistikow said Luchterhand spends most days on the road, traveling to community events, and drives his personal car when he goes to the office, about once a week.

"All of his other trips would be strictly business trips that he's taking over northern Wisconsin," Leistikow said. "He's been very careful about not using his state car ever for personal miles, so there's not ever a question about his car."

"The governor has every expectation that he'll continue to follow that policy closely."

Some cars are shared.

For example, a 2000 Ford Taurus assigned to Brent C. Pickard, a public affairs officer for the DOT in Eau Claire, logged more than 9,200 miles with no personal mileage claimed. But Pickard said the number of cars in the district was reduced a few years ago for budgetary reasons, so four others have access to the car, which is in his name. When it's not being driven, it stays at the office, Pickard said.

"It sits in the parking lot at the state office building unless someone picks it up to go wherever it is they are going," Pickard said.



E-MAIL | JS ONLINE | TMJ4 | WTMJ | WKTI

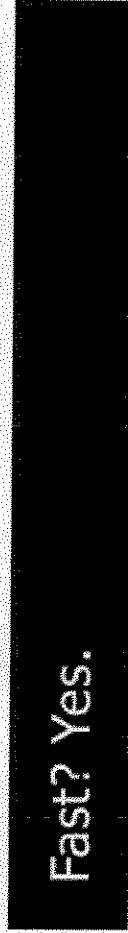
Web search



Network Features



Journal Sentinel Services Classifieds OnWisconsin LIVE AdFinder Yellow Pages



News Articles:  
Advanced Searches

Search

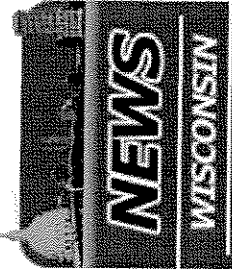


Subscribe to the  
Journal Sentinel  
e-mail mailing

JS Online Features List

ON WISCONSIN : JS ONLINE : NEWS : WISCONSIN :

E-MAIL | PRINT  
THIS STORY



Shop the city's largest  
lighting showroom  
Find energy solutions  
for your home

## Sloppy logs impeding state-car inquiry

### Lack of central system complicates tracking

By PATRICK MARLEY  
pmarley@journalsentinel.com

Posted: April 12, 2004

**Madison** - Sloppy record-keeping could slow an inquiry into whether more than 1,700 state employees are properly reimbursing the state for personal miles logged on government cars, officials said Monday.

Preliminary records released Friday indicate that more than 60% of employees who have state cars paid for no personal mileage during a recent 14-month period.

But the records may not be accurate, Administration Secretary Marc Marotta said. He noted that the state lacks a centralized system for the records, leaving agencies to track the use of government cars in different manners.

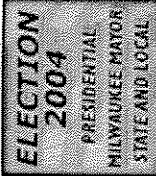
#### Quotable

“ Obviously, if people are supposed to be paying for their personal mileage and they're not, then we've got to make sure they pay. ”

Special Features:



- News
- Wisconsin
- Milwaukee
- Waukesha
- Ozaukee
- Washington
- Racine
- Editorials
- Crossroads
- Columnists
- Obituaries
- Letter to Editor
- Weather
- National Wire
- State Wire



Archived Features:

For instance, two University of Wisconsin chancellors are listed as not reimbursing the state for personal miles when other records and interviews suggest that such payments have, in fact, been made.

- Gov. Jim Doyle

Discrepancies like that highlight a wider problem with tracking who is - and is not - properly reimbursing the state for personal miles on state cars, Marotta said.

"There ought to be better record-keeping," he said. "It should be pretty easy. We're sort of surprised to find out it's not as uniform and easy to detect as you might think it would be."

Gov. Jim Doyle said Monday that more information is needed to determine whether there is a problem with employee mileage reimbursements, but that he is committed to rooting out any abuse.

"Obviously, if people are supposed to be paying for their personal mileage and they're not, then we've got to make sure they pay," Doyle said Monday after touring stem cell research facilities at the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Waisman Center.

### Review under way

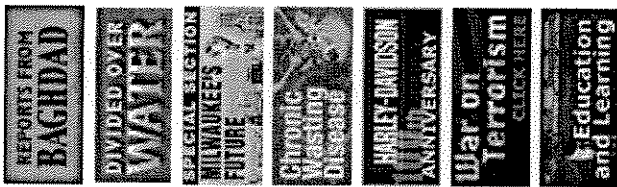
Marotta launched an inquiry into the use of state cars in late February after Attorney General Peg Lautenschlager was arrested for drunken driving in a state car. Last month, the state Ethics Board ordered Lautenschlager and aide Dan Bach to reimburse the state for the personal miles and hit them with \$250 fines.

Since Marotta asked all agencies to review their fleet of personally assigned vehicles on Feb. 27, 80 cars have been given up by employees.

In coming weeks, Marotta said, supervisors will talk to all employees with state vehicles to determine whether they are reimbursing the state for personal miles they might put on their cars, Marotta said.



AdFinder



- [Jobs](#)
- [Cars](#)
- [Real Estate](#)
- [Rentals](#)
- [Personals](#)
- [General Classifieds](#)
- [Buy & Sell Tickets](#)
- [Contests](#)

"Inquiries will be made of virtually everyone in the state," Marotta said.

The department also will establish new rules for logging personal miles, he said. Records are not kept in a uniform manner, which has frustrated attempts to make sure everyone is complying with the policy, he said.

State records provided to the Journal Sentinel last week say UW-Green Bay Chancellor Bruce Shepard and recently deceased UW-River Falls Chancellor Ann Lydecker did not reimburse the state for any of the 22,000 miles they each put on their state cars from January 2003 through February 2004. But Monday, UW-River Falls provided records showing that Lydecker paid \$1,125 for personal miles during that time.

"Why DOA couldn't find this is a puzzlement to us," said Mark Kinders, a UW-River Falls spokesman.

Shepard said he had more than \$50 a month deducted from his paycheck to cover his commute to and from work. He said he kept records when he first took over the job and then based the deduction on a high mileage average.

"I erred on the positive side so the state wasn't cheated," he said.

Nonetheless, it is not proper to handle mileage reimbursement through payroll deductions, said state administration lawyer John Rothschild. Reimbursements should be made to the Department of Administration, which maintains the state fleet, rather than the UW System, he said.

"That shouldn't have been done that way," Rothschild said of Shepard's arrangement.

The preliminary investigation shows that about 1,100 of the more than 1,700 employees with state cars paid no personal mileage during the 14 months.

**Need Help?**

- [Searching Archives](#)
- [Wireless Access](#)
- [Site Topics](#)
- [Table of Contents](#)
- [Contact Staff](#)
- [Subscriptions](#)

### **Cars with multiple users**

Although assigned to an individual, some of those cars are actually kept at a state office and used by several employees, Marotta said. It remains unclear how many vehicles are maintained that way, but Marotta said he wants that practice to end.

"If it's assigned, it ought to be assigned to an agency" rather than an individual, Marotta said. "To me, that's poor record-keeping."

But Bill Smith, the deputy secretary of the Department of Natural Resources, said his agency treats some of its cars that way so employees with specialized duties can keep their equipment and uniforms in the cars. If the cars were assigned to the agency pool, any Department of Natural Resources employee could use them and the equipment would have to be removed daily, he said.

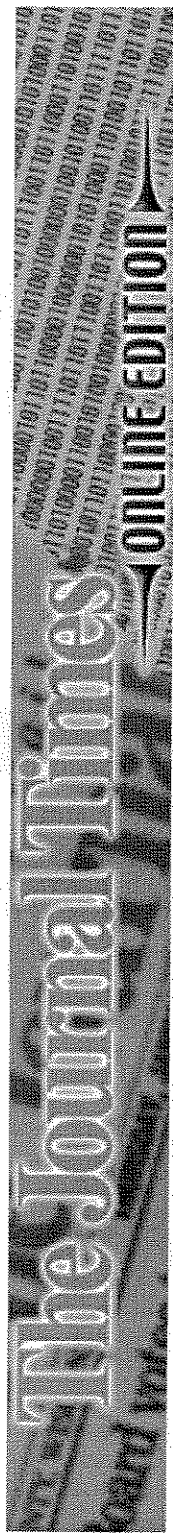
With 57% of its employees paying some personal miles, the department has the highest percentage of employees reimbursing the state among major agencies. The Department of Transportation has the lowest reimbursement rate of the large agencies, at 23%.

The records show that 286 state cars had more than 20,000 miles put on them during the 14 months, with no personal miles. Others racked up fewer than 5,000 miles during that period, with one putting on just 368 miles. State guidelines require employees to show that they will drive 16,000 miles or more a year on official business to get a state car, Rothschild said.

From the April 13, 2004 editions of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

[BACK TO TOP](#)





Home | News | Sports | Features | Records | Special Sections | Special Events  
 Archive Search  14-Day Search  or Search All Archives

Classifieds | Homes | Jobs | Cars  
 Subscribe | Contact Us | User Guide

Email this story ||| Print this story

[More Headlines](#)

## Reform state car use

Reform state car use

That giant creaking sound we hear over in Madison is the barn door swinging shut - actually it's the garage door - on the personal use of state cars by agency employees.

In the wake of state Attorney General Peg Lautenschlager's state car problems, the Department of Administration fired off a letter to state agencies earlier this month, telling them to double-check and make sure state employees are reimbursing the state when they use state cars for personal purposes.

A preliminary audit of reimbursement rates on the 1,700 vehicles that are personally assigned to state employees showed that 60 percent of them had no personal miles reported on them from January 2003 to February 2004.

Zip, zilch, nada, nothing.  
 All those cars were undoubtedly parked overnight and on weekends right there in the parking lots of various state agencies and not a one of them ever cast a shadow on the private driveway of a state employee. Right.

The corollary, of course, is that 40 percent of state employees DID report some personal mileage and presumably reimbursed the state at the required rate of 34.2 cents per mile. They deserve credit for their honesty.

The problem, of course, is that it is nearly impossible to go back over a year's time - and probably many years' time - and get any kind of accurate reading on unreimbursed personal

Fairness, common sense demand IRS audit changes

What's next for Unified?

Advertisement

mileage.

That's the fault of poor state record-keeping, different methods used by different agencies and - we would guess - lax oversight by supervisors who are responsible for enforcement.

And, ultimately, that's the responsibility of the Department of Administration and Gov. Jim Doyle.

Doyle said this week he is committed to uncovering any mileage reimbursement abuses, but that more information is needed to determine if there is a problem.

We would suggest a good place to start would be by looking at reimbursement records submitted for the past two months, and comparing them to reimbursement rates before that. Our guess is that just as soon as Lautenschlager's car hit the ditch, and the issue of state car use hit the front pages, the personal mileage reimbursement reports on some state vehicles instantaneously got a lot more accurate.

Now, we don't expect that clamping down on personal mileage reimbursement is going to balance the state budget. It won't. But with a fleet of 1,700 cars and no reported personal mileage on more than half of them, the fact is that even home-and-back commutes to the office of five miles or so could be draining \$200,000, \$300,000 or even \$800,000 from state coffers each year.

That isn't right.

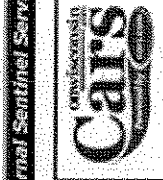
The governor and the state Department of Administration should standardize mileage reimbursement reporting, centralize it with one agency and conduct periodic audits on state car use to get the fleet back on the road to honesty.



[ADVERTISE HERE](#)



[Click here to view The Journal Times On-line privacy policy.](#) [Click here to view The Journal Times Do Not Call policy.](#) [Comments or Questions? Click Here.](#)  
This entire web site content copyright 2003, **The Journal Times, 212 4th St., Racine, WI, 53403.** All Rights Reserved.



News Articles:  
Advanced Searches

Search



Subscribe to the  
magazine for  
similar online

JS Online Features List

LOOKING TO

FIND

Journal Sentinel Services | Classifieds | OnWisconsin LIVE | AdFinder | Yellow Pages

Web search

GO

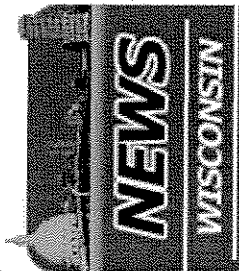
Network Features

REAL TIME



ON WISCONSIN : JS ONLINE : NEWS : WISCONSIN :

E-MAIL | PRINT  
THIS STORY



News

Wisconsin

Milwaukee

Waukesha

Ozaukee

Washington

Racine

Editorials

Crossroads

Columnists

Obituaries

Letter to Editor

Weather

National Wire

State Wire

Special Features:

## Low mileage logged on state cars

### More than 1,000 fell below distance needed to qualify for vehicle

By PATRICK MARLEY  
pmarley@journal sentinel.com

Posted: April 13, 2004

**Madison** - More than 1,000 state employees with government cars appear to have logged low mileage in recent months, even though state guidelines say the vehicles are meant primarily for workers who travel heavily.

Usually, state employees must show they drive 16,000 miles a year on official business to qualify for a car, according to state guidelines. But a review of state records shows that 1,185 of 1,712 employees assigned state cars - or 69.2% - fell below that number in a recent period.

The accuracy of the records, however, has

**Madison**

**The Numbers**

**69.2%**

Percentage of state employees with state cars who drove them less than

Page 1 of 5  
- Bot management  
- Network Features  
- REAL TIME

- Next disc  
- no central  
- records  
- Bot management  
- Network Features  
- REAL TIME

Priority of  
exploration  
- worth of  
- source legit  
- source legit  
- source legit

Shop the city's largest lighting showroom  
Find energy solutions for your home

11  
- source legit  
- source legit  
- source legit

NOT  
WIPSP

been drawn into question by Administration Secretary Marc Marotta, who is heading an inquiry into the use of state cars. Preliminary records suggest about six in 10 employees with state cars paid for no personal miles in 2003 and the first two months of 2004.

the 16,000 miles required to be eligible for a car. State officials question whether the records are accurate.

The records for the 14-month period cover cars that were assigned to employees on both a long- and short-term basis. Retirements and dismissals account for some of the low-mileage figures, but it remains unclear how much departing employees and other factors skewed the numbers, administration attorney John Rothschild said Tuesday.

Officials at various agencies said the records maintained by the Department of Administration do not line up with what their own data show.

For instance, a 2002 Ford recently used for the "Alice in Dairyland" agriculture promotion typically covered 30,000 miles a year, said Will Hughes, the administrator for the Agricultural Development Division. State administration records, however, show the vehicle putting on just 6,913 miles during the 14-month period that ended in February 2004.

"That doesn't sound right at all," Hughes said.

Marotta, who was on vacation Tuesday and unavailable for comment, launched an investigation in late February to determine whether employees are properly reimbursing the state for personal miles driven on government cars.

The review started four days after Attorney General Peg Lautenschlager was arrested for drunken driving, leading to questions about her use of a state car for personal business. Last month, Lautenschlager and top aide Dan Bach agreed to reimburse the state for personal miles and pay a \$250 penalty in a settlement with the state Ethics Board.

Archived Features:

WISCONSIN  
Presidential  
DEBATE 2004  
\*\*\*\*\*  
ARCHIVED  
COVERAGE

ELECTION  
2004  
PRESIDENTIAL  
MILWAUKEE MAYOR  
STATE AND LOCAL

EDITORIALS  
ON THE 2004  
MAYORAL RACE

STILL  
SEPARATE  
AND  
UNEQUAL

MADE IN  
CHINA

ONE MILE  
photos, stories

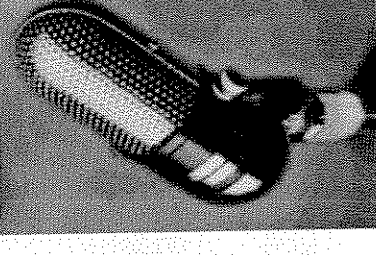
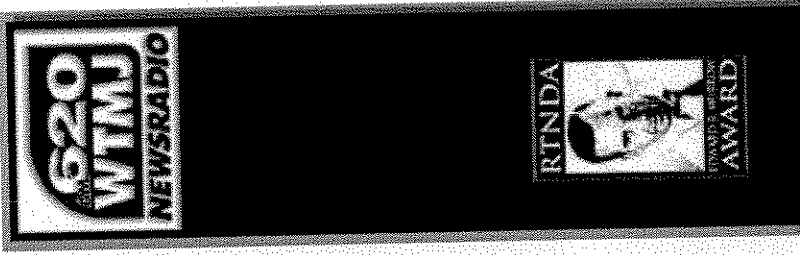
PROPERTY  
TAX  
WATCH

WAR IN IRAQ  
LATEST NEWS AND  
ARCHIVED COVERAGE

CROSSROADS  
analysis, opinions  
Views on the news

PHOTO  
OF THE  
DAY

3 Takes  
5  
A DAILY Q&A



MARKETPLACE

AdFinder

- [Jobs](#)
- [Cars](#)
- [Real Estate](#)
- [Rentals](#)
- [Personals](#)
- [General Classifieds](#)
- [Buy & Sell Tickets](#)
- [Contests](#)

### Cost savings sought

The inquiry is part of a wider effort to save money on the state's fleet of cars.

In the six weeks since Marotta asked agency heads to review cars under their supervision, 80 personally assigned vehicles have been turned over to the state fleet.

Authorities hope to wrap up their review of the matter by the end of the month, Rothschild said.

To put 16,000 miles on a car annually, an employee must drive an average of 1,333 miles a month. The records maintained by the Department of Administration show more than two-thirds of the employees with state cars failed to hit that average from January 2003 through February 2004.

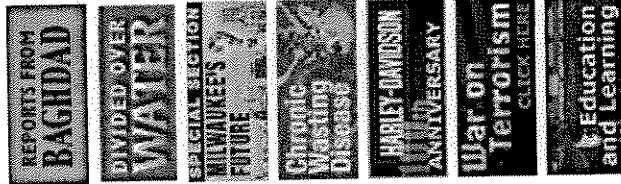
For example, 60 of the 96 employees with state cars at the Department of Health and Family Services put less than the minimum on their cars. That's because much of the work force is based in Milwaukee, department spokesman Jim Malone said.

"It's going to be very difficult to log 16,000 miles on a vehicle in a compact, urban environment," he said.

Using cars from the Department of Administration's pool, rather than personally assigned vehicles, would be impractical, he said. But Malone noted that some employees may lose their state cars as part of the statewide look into the government's fleet.

"We probably will find a few that could be turned in," Malone said.

At the Department of Natural Resources, 254 of the 313 employees with personally assigned cars - 81.1% - averaged less than 1,333 miles a month during the 14 months. Many department employees need a state vehicle because they work far from offices with motor pools, but



#### Need Help?

- [Searching Archives](#)
- [Wireless Access](#)
- [Site Topics](#)
- [Table of Contents](#)
- [Contact Staff](#)
- [Subscriptions](#)

the areas they cover are small enough that they drive less than 16,000 miles a year, said Vance Rayburn, who heads the agency's Division of Customer and Employee Services.

At the Department of Transportation, 337 of 506 employees with state cars - 66.6% - drove less than 1,333 miles a month. Peg Schmitt, a department spokeswoman, said transportation officials were double-checking those figures and making sure all employees are complying with the rules.

"The governor and our secretary have made it very clear the rules need to be followed," she said.

### **Exemptions given**

Under the state guidelines, employees are exempt from the 16,000 mileage minimum with "appropriate agency justification." Such requests must be approved by the Department of Administration.

Scores of employees, such as state troopers, undercover investigators and people who inspect the work of contractors, are exempt from the mileage minimum because of their job duties. Holding a high-level job does not mean someone will automatically be assigned a state car, Rothschild said.

Secretary of State Douglas La Follette used to have a state car, but he didn't drive it very often.

During the 14 months, he put just 19 miles on a state-owned 2000 Dodge, according to the records. But La Follette said Tuesday those miles actually reflect just the first two or three months of 2003, before he turned the car back to the state.

"It reached the point that I used it so little I thought it wasn't worth it," he said.

Marotta has said he plans to apply a more uniform reporting standard

for state cars because of the poor record-keeping. Officials at various agencies in state government similarly questioned the accuracy of the records.

According to the administration records, a 1994 GMC van assigned to the Division of Energy had no miles put on it during the 14 months, but Deputy Administrator John Marx disputed that. The van sat idle for about six months because of an employee vacancy, he said, but was otherwise used on a regular basis.

Other agency vans were a few thousand miles short of the annual 16,000 mark, but Marx said they were needed because of heavy equipment used to monitor contractors who weather-proof homes for the poor as part of a \$50 million state program.

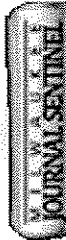
"If they put on fewer miles (than 16,000), that's a good thing," Marx said, noting the savings to taxpayers.

Percentage of state employees with state cars who drove them less than the 16,000 miles required to be eligible for a car. State officials question whether the records are accurate.

From the April 14, 2004 editions of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

[BACK TO TOP](#)

News Articles:  
Advanced Searches

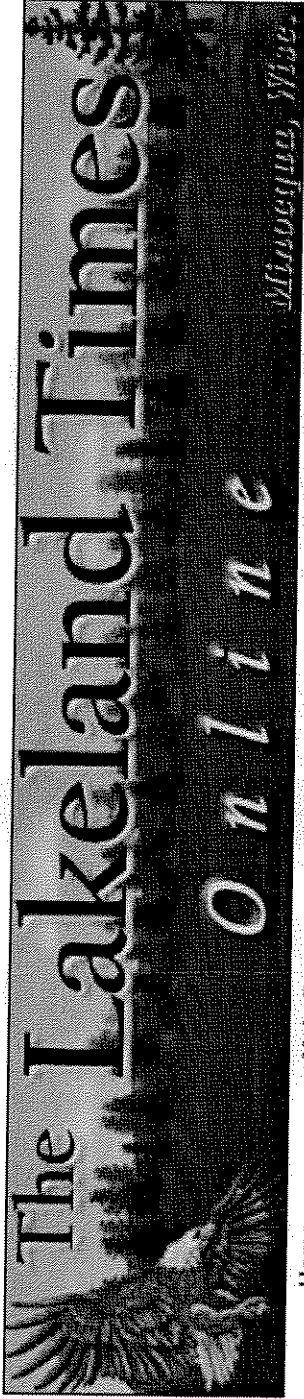


Subscribe to the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel online

JS Online Features List

© Copyright 2004, Journal Sentinel Inc. All rights reserved.  
Produced by [Journal Interactive](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

Journal Sentinel Inc. is a subsidiary of [Journal Communications](#).



- Home
- Main Pages
- Extras
- Advertising
- Contact Us
- Links

<p><b>news</b> "Sen. Cowles calls for audit of state vehicle fleet"</p> <p><b>sports</b> "Baseball off to booming start"</p> <p><b>outdoors</b> "Turkeys up north"</p> <p><b>features</b> "Working hard to 'make it' in the face of adversity"</p>	<p><b>EDITORIALS</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Apr 13</p> <p><b>DNR vehicle buys prove mismanagement, need reform</b></p> <p><b>By: Gregg Walker</b></p> <p><a href="#">More articles</a></p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Apr. 15, 2004</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><a href="#">Search Archives</a></p> <p>The stories we have reported this past week about DNR vehicle purchases should come as no surprise. Certainly we weren't amazed - appalled, yes, but not surprised - to find out the agency had doled out \$18 million over a four-year period for vehicles.</p> <p>But others were caught off guard, some of them in the Legislature, despite all the stories about DNR taxpayer abuses we have covered. Fortunately, this seems to have been the wake-up call that was needed.</p> <p>Sen. Robert Cowles of Green Bay has now asked for an audit of the state fleet, and others - political leaders and media alike - will likely take another, closer look at this giant agency.</p> <p>Certainly these staggering numbers underscore and epitomize what we have been saying in editorials for some time now: The DNR is out of control and mismanaged, is abusing taxpayers and average citizens, and has eluded legislative oversight.</p> <p>And it has done so not for the environment's sake but for raw political power and for personal agendas that are built upon hypocrisy and double standards and inconsistencies.</p>
--	--	--

lgm 4 yrs



The figures we have reported should be an affront to all of us, especially here in the Northwoods, where one out of 10 families lives below the federal poverty line of \$18,100 a year in income.

Think about it.

In 2002, the DNR spent almost \$17,000 a day buying vehicles. In other words, they spent every DAY just about what 10 percent of all Northwoods families must live on for a YEAR. Every two days, the agency spent more than Oneida County's per capita annual income.

While people here struggle to put food on their table, to pay the high cost of gasoline it takes to get to work, and to maintain a modicum of comfort in their lives, DNR bureaucrats were zooming past them on the highway in luxurious Dodge Grand Caravans, Ford Excursions and Chevy Suburbans.

Where are our priorities? To put these numbers in another context, we should compare DNR spending to other services the state provides.

To cite just two examples, the DNR's northern region by itself spent \$1.9 million on vehicles in 2002. That's 46 percent more than the \$1.3 million the state provided for child care resource and referral centers statewide that year.

It's almost four times more than the \$500,333 the Northern Waters Library Service – serving 10 northern counties – received to operate in 2003.

So things are out of whack down in Madison, especially inside the DNR. That much is obvious. But the vehicle numbers tell us more.

They tell us the agency is either corrupt or mismanaged or both; they tell us the DNR doesn't intend to live by the rules it wants to impose on everyone else; they tell us that DNR environmental managers have no respect for the environment.

Case in point. The DNR answered our open records request for all agency purchases for the past 10 years by providing an incomplete list, a fact we discovered through investigation and, to be frank, by plain dumb luck.

Now either this was deliberate or an error by the department's information supervisors. On the one hand, it would show the agency's willingness to deceive; on the other it would demonstrate a high degree of incompetence and sloppiness in agency record keeping.

Either way, the facts cry out for an agency downsizing and reorganization.

Then there are those rules they want us all to live by. One of them is to get rid of gas-guzzling SUVs and to carpool so fewer vehicles will clog the road.

We know that's what the agency wants because those goals are right there in a 1998 DNR document called the Climate Change Action Plan. Under former Secretary George Meyer's guidance, the DNR spent four years developing this plan to reduce greenhouse emissions.

One thing interesting about the recommendations – which are based on the 1992 Rio environmental accords – is that only Phase I is described as “voluntary,” which leads me to wonder what the DNR intends for participation in Phase II.

In any event, the plan calls upon the state to lead by example, to purchase fewer vehicles, to encourage less single occupancy vehicle driving, and to buy only fuel-efficient vehicles, all this to better educate the public and prepare them for the government mandates they will one day impose on the general population.

But surprise, surprise. Right after the report was released, the DNR went on its four-year, record-breaking \$18 million spending spree, buying such gas-guzzlers as the Suburbans and Caravans and even Excursions, which get 12 miles to the gallon.

To this day, departmental officials defend their extensive use of SUVs and make clear they have no intention to stop using them.

So what the DNR wants to inflict on the rest of us – even on other state agencies – they don't want to abide by themselves. So very typical, and so very revealing about how those in the agency's upper echelons truly feel about the environment.

Of course, none of these figures we have reported include fuel or maintenance costs. None include the Cadillac health care and pension plans of the bureaucrats who drive these vehicles, or the overtime costs they incur doing so. Those figures will no doubt prove to be truly astronomical.

What to do?

Surely it is time now for average citizens to demand that our lawmakers scrutinize this agency and keep the pressure on them to reform the DNR. Now, with the spotlight shining brightly on the mess inside the agency, we have an opportunity for change, and we as citizens cannot afford to squander it.

Reforms have to be smart, too. To reform the DNR should not be to eviscerate those sections within the bureau that are doing their jobs. Those in the forestry and fish management and wildlife divisions perform valuable services with limited budgets. These conservation services should be protected and even enhanced.

But that can be done only if we root out the elites who run the agency. The powerful, credentialled bureaucrats who pursue private political agendas with their pseudo-scientific voodoo must be removed; the bureaucratic mechanisms that brought them to power must be abolished.

Can we do it? You bet we can.

As Anita Roddick once wrote: "If you think you're too small to make a difference, you haven't been in bed with a mosquito."

**Posted: April 13, 2004**

[More articles](#) | [Subscribe](#)



[Home](#) | [Classifieds](#) | [News](#) | [Weather Stats](#) | [Sports](#) | [Outdoors](#) | [Features](#) | [Obituaries](#) | [Opinions](#) | [Calendar](#) | [Subscriptions](#) | [Send Email](#)  
[Search Archives](#)

**Internet Services  
Provided By**

© Copyright 2003-04, Lakeland Printing Co., Inc. All Rights Reserved.  
Phone: (715) 356-5236

Wisconsin State Journal April 14, 2004

# Gas receipts raise questions about attorney general's use of state car

By Scott Milfred  
Wisconsin State Journal

Attorney General Peg Lautenschlager gassed up her state car in Racine just hours after attending a political fund-raiser in the same city, state fuel receipts show.

Yet she insists she didn't use the state car to get to the local Democratic Party fund-raiser, which

could have violated state law.

The incident is one of several involving gas receipts that raise questions about whether the attorney general used her state car for personal or political events beyond what the state Ethics Board determined in its investigation into the matter.

"I have never taken a (state) car to a state political event," Lautenschlager said two weeks ago,

when first asked about an initial batch of fuel receipts the Wisconsin State Journal compared to her work calendar.

"On any of those events where there were political things," Lautenschlager said, "I always used my personal car or somebody else's."

The State Journal obtained 59

gas receipts from purchases Lautenschlager made at filling stations across Wisconsin. She bought the gas between Feb. 1, 2003, and Feb. 17, 2004, using her state-issued fuel purchasing card.

Lautenschlager said she always kept the card with her state-issued car, typically a 1999 Buick Park Avenue.

The Ethics Board didn't look at the gas receipts when it tried to piece together how many miles the attorney general owed taxpayers for commuting to and from her Fond du Lac home in her state car.

Late last month, the board fined Lautenschlager \$250 and charged her \$672 for 1,969 personal miles of travel. The investigation followed Lautenschlager's drunken driving conviction after she drove her state car into a ditch.

Lautenschlager has refused in recent days to answer questions about specific trips that correspond to gas purchases. She did say previously she sometimes drove to meetings not listed on her calendar.

"I can't really reconstruct



State Journal archives

**Wisconsin Attorney General Peg Lautenschlager, seen here reflected in the television camera's viewfinder, was cleared of ethics violations by the state Ethics Board on March 29. But a State Journal review of gas receipts raises questions about whether she used her state car for personal or political events beyond what the Ethics Board determined.**

any of this because I don't have the proper records to," she said. "And that's where we ran into problems."

## More commutes possible

The gas receipts show Lautenschlager filled up her state car at least 21 times in Fond du Lac. On or around only three of those dates did her work calendar show state business in the vicinity of Fond du Lac.

In addition, the attorney general filled up her state car five times in cities between Fond du Lac and Madison or

Milwaukee, such as Beaver Dam, Waupun and Slinger. These could be more commutes, because her calendar showed no state business to explain the routes.

Twenty-one Fond du Lac fill-ups, minus three for state business, plus five additional commutes would equal 23. If Lautenschlager commuted 23 times, she would have owed the state about \$470 more than she paid.

The attorney general put 14.5 gallons of gas in her state car at 3 p.m. on Christmas Day in Fond du Lac, even though

...cont. next page

Wisconsin State Journal April 14, 2004

...cont. from prev. page

her calendar shows no state business that day. Ethics Board attorney Jonathan Becker said she told investigators she didn't use her state car for official business for several days surrounding the holiday.

Lautenschlager put 12.6 gallons of gas in her state car at 9:30 a.m. on Friday, June 13, 2003, in Fond du Lac. Her schedule that day included several Milwaukee events at a crime lab, then a reception for Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry, a speech at the state Democratic convention and finally a meeting with then-presidential candidate Howard Dean.

State rules forbid taking a state car to a political event, said Administration Department attorney John Rothschild. Even if she switched cars in Milwaukee and took a private car to the political events, state law might require her to pay a portion of the mileage on her state car.

Politicking in Racine

Lautenschlager purchased 13 gallons of gas at 7:08 a.m. on Monday, March 17, 2003, in Racine. Her work calendar shows she was a featured speaker at the Racine County

Democratic Dinner at the Roma Lodge in Racine the night before from about 5 to 8 p.m. The county party raised several hundred dollars, after expenses, by charging \$25 at the door.

Lautenschlager's calendar lists no other events in Racine on those days or in previous weeks. A local Web site has a picture of Lautenschlager mingling at the lodge in front of what appears to be a campaign lawn sign.

Lautenschlager originally said Fond du Lac County Board member Todd Schmitz drove her in a Grand Prix to and from the Racine political event.

"I just remember it very, very clearly," she said, noting her husband had just had a medical procedure and thoughts of that distracted her during her speech.

Days after that comment, when additional state records showed the exact date and time of the Racine gas purchase, Lautenschlager's staff hedged on how she got to the fund-raiser. It's possible Schmitz drove her, said Lautenschlager aide Vaughn Vance. But that would have required a Fond du Lac-Racine round trip on Sunday night,

followed by a return trip to Racine in her state car early the next morning after only a few hours of sleep.

In an interview Tuesday, Schmitz said he couldn't find the trip on his calendar. He may have volunteered to drive the attorney general that night because he remembers taking her to a Racine political event, he said. But he can't remember when or which car he drove.

Another possibility, Vance said, is that the attorney general drove her state car to Milwaukee for state business. She then would have ridden in a private vehicle to and from the Racine fund-raiser Sunday night, only to drive her state car back to Racine that same night to stay at a co-worker's house. She then would have had the state car Monday to work on a confidential legal matter in the Racine area, Vance said.

But Lautenschlager told the state Ethics Board she didn't use her state car for any state business that Sunday or Monday, Becker said. And her calendar doesn't list any events in Milwaukee.

Contact Scott Milfred at smilfred@madison.com or 252-6129.

The Capital Times April 15, 2004

# New twist in AG car probe

## Fund-raising trip alleged

By Anita Weier

The Capital Times

The head of the state Ethics Board said today that he will review state records to find out whether Attorney General Peg Lautenschlager used a state car to attend a political function in Racine.

The allegation came in a Wisconsin State Journal story on Wednesday.

"We'll take a look at the facts and see if that's the end of the story or if it leads someplace else," said Ethics Board Director Roth Judd.

The investigation of Lautenschlager's use of her state vehicle began after she drove the car into a ditch while under the influence of alcohol as she was driving from Madison to her home in Fond du Lac.

Lautenschlager said Wednesday that no state vehicle was used to attend the Racine County Democratic Dinner on March 16, 2003. She also told reporters that she never used the state car for fund-raisers. She told the Ethics Board that she never used a state car for campaign activities, Judd said.

"It was not atypical of the attorney general to travel to a political event in a personal vehicle and then return to the same geographic location the next day in her state vehicle to conduct state business," a written statement from Lautenschlager's office said.

Approximately 14 hours



FILE PHOTO

**Attorney General Peg Lautenschlager told reporters she never used the state car to attend political fund-raisers.**

after appearing at the Racine County Democratic Dinner, the attorney general returned to the Racine area to participate in a confidential meeting related to an official DOJ matter, the statement said.

Judd was quizzed about the Ethics Board's investigation of Lautenschlager's use of a state vehicle when he appeared before the Legislature's Joint Finance Committee on Wednesday to request additional money to fund a previous investigation of former state Sen. Gary George.

Rep. David Ward, R-Ft. Atkinson, asked Judd why a newspaper apparently had information that the Ethics Board did not, namely gas receipts.

Judd responded that he had received a printout and a posting date from the state Department of Administration about gas purchases, but not a gas purchase date.

"Just in the past week we

found out the DOA became aware it could obtain the day and hour of purchase," Judd said.

However, the Ethics Board was focusing on a different matter — whether Lautenschlager had used her state vehicle for personal use, mainly in commuting between Madison and her home in Fond du Lac.

Lautenschlager was able to document to the board that only 2,000 miles of travel since she took office in January 2003 was not for state business use. She reimbursed the state for \$672 for that mileage and paid a \$250 penalty to the Ethics Board.

Ward said his concern was that the state is paying bills for investigations that may not be top quality.

Judd said the state uses some of the best investigators in Wisconsin and pays them from \$75 to \$150 per hour.

E-mail: aweier@madison.com

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel April 15, 2004

# Lautenschlager's use of state car under more scrutiny

## Officials to compare new records with documents used in investigation

By **PATRICK MARLEY**  
pmarley@journalsentinel.com

**Madison** — The state Ethics Board will review more records related to Attorney General Peg Lautenschlager's use of a state car in coming days, despite a settlement it reached with her last month.

Gas receipts and other records that were not previously made available to the board will be turned over this week for staff to review, the board's executive director, R. Roth Judd, said Wednesday.

Those records will be compared with other documents the board compiled during its investigation to make sure its findings were accurate, he said.

The Ethics Board found last month that Lautenschlager failed to reimburse the state \$672 for 1,969 personal miles logged on her state car during more than a year in office. She settled up that bill and paid a \$250 penalty on March 29 in an agreement reached with the panel.

"One very, very likely outcome is it will just corroborate everything we found earlier," Judd said in an interview. "We're going to check it and recheck it to make sure everything's accurate."

After briefing the Legislature's Joint Finance Committee on the matter, Judd told reporters that the board's findings were unlikely to change but that the new records may "lead in some other direction," which could potentially reopen the Ethics Board investigation.

Judd said he wants to review the gas receipts to make sure that a state car was not used to travel to any campaign-related event.

"I'd like to know the answer to that," Judd said, responding to a story in Wednesday's Wisconsin State Journal that tracked where Lautenschlager bought gas.

Lautenschlager said during a Wednesday morning public appearance and in a lengthy statement released in the afternoon that she had not used a state car for political appearances.

"At no time was the state vehicle used to attend political events," she said in her statement.

During the investigation, which developed after Lautenschlager was arrested for drunken driving in a state car during a Feb. 23 trip from Madison to her Fond du Lac home, the Ethics Board reviewed gas receipts that showed where she bought fuel, but not precisely when she bought it.

Investigators learned this week that the state Department of Administration could provide records that show exactly when purchases were

made, rather than just when transactions on a state credit card were posted to an account, as had earlier been provided.

The department is also turning over records related to repairs done on a 1999 Buick Park Avenue and possibly other state cars Lautenschlager drove, Ethics Board lawyer Jonathan Becker said.

Because Lautenschlager kept no record of business and personal trips she made, the Ethics Board required her to offer proof of all trips she made on state business. Using her official calendar, she was able to account for most of the roughly 23,000 miles she put on the car in 2003 and early 2004, Becker said.

Investigators reviewed the initial records on gas purchases but gave them little weight because the burden of proof was on Lautenschlager to show business miles, Becker and Judd said in separate interviews.

State law bars using state cars in most cases to attend campaign events for or against particular candidates. An alleged violation would be reviewed by the state Elections Board rather than the Ethics Board. Kevin Kennedy, executive director of the Elections Board, said no review of Lautenschlager was under way because no one has filed a sworn complaint about the matter.

*Steven Walters of the Journal Sentinel staff contributed to this report*

Wisconsin State Journal April 15, 2004

## Lautenschlager's gas receipts will be reviewed

The state's top ethics official will examine the records.

By Phil Brinkman  
Wisconsin State Journal

The state's top ethics official said Wednesday he will review gas receipts from Attorney General Peg Lautenschlager's state car.

The receipts were described in a story in the Wisconsin State Journal on Wednesday. They raise questions about whether the attorney general drove the car for personal use beyond what the Ethics Board determined in an investigation concluded last month, and whether she used the car to attend a Democratic Party fund-raiser, which could have violated state law.

"I'm not calling it reopening the investigation," said Roth Judd, executive director of the board. "I'm just going to look at them and see what they say."

Also Wednesday, Lautenschlager issued a press release responding to questions about some of the receipts after refusing repeated requests by the State Journal to explain specific trips that corresponded to gas purchases.

In the release, Lautenschlager

repeated she never used her state car to attend political events. She also challenged the State Journal's methodology of comparing her gas receipts to her official calendar.

The newspaper's investigation found 23 times when she gassed up the car in her hometown of Fond du Lac or other cities where, and at times when, she had no state business scheduled.

"My calendar is used for scheduling purposes and has seldom contained entries for events scheduled hours prior to the event, nor has it ever been meant to be a complete listing of all personal and business meetings," she said.

Judd said he didn't expect the gas receipts would change the board's assessment that Lautenschlager owed the state \$672 for 1,969 personal miles she put on the car. The board also fined her \$250.

"I think our thought is, it doesn't make any difference in the amount of the payment she makes ... because of the methodology we took," Judd said.

The Ethics Board arrived at its figure by first assuming Lautenschlager owed the state for all of the nearly 23,000 miles she put on the car since taking office in January 2003, then subtracted mileage for any documented business trips on her calendar.

In the release, Lautenschlager said some of the gas receipts noted by the newspaper relate to official state business not noted on her calendar.

According to her calendar, she was the featured speaker at a Racine County Democratic dinner in Racine the evening of March 16, 2003. State records show she bought gas in Racine

at 7:08 the next morning.

Her calendar lists no official events in Racine on those days or in previous weeks. In various statements, she said she either drove her personal car from her home in Fond du Lac about 85 miles away or was given a ride to the event, then returned the next morning in her state car.

On Wednesday, she said the trip concerned a "confidential meeting related to an official DOJ matter." But the statement appears to contradict an earlier statement to the Ethics Board that she hadn't used her state car for state business on either March 16 or March 17.

Records reviewed by the State Journal also showed she put gas in the car on Christmas Day 2003 in Fond du Lac, even though her calendar shows no state business that day and she told the Ethics Board she hadn't used it then.

On Wednesday, she said her father underwent open heart surgery the day before Christmas and she hadn't had time to gas up the car before then. The statement suggests she only drove the car to purchase gas and then returned home.

Judd said the investigation and continuing questions about her use of the vehicle could have been avoided if Lautenschlager had kept a log of how many miles she drove the car for each trip, and whether the trip was business or personal.

State policy allows people assigned vehicles to use their cars for commuting, but they must reimburse the state for such trips. Lautenschlager, who said she misunderstood the policy, didn't reimburse the state for personal mileage until the Ethics Board investigation.

Contact Phil Brinkman at  
pbrinkman@madison.com  
or 252-6145.



Wisconsin State Journal April 15, 2004

OUR OPINION

# Why Lautenschlager can't get off the hook

**A**ttorney General Peg Lautenschlager just keeps paying. Lautenschlager paid a fine, lost her driving privileges for a year, and voluntarily gave up two weeks' salary for driving a state car into a ditch while apparently legally drunk.

She also paid a fine of \$250 and repaid the state \$672 for 1,969 miles after the state Ethics Board found Lautenschlager used



Lautenschlager

her state car to commute from her office in Madison to her home in Fond du Lac, violating state law governing use of official state vehicles.

Now Lautenschlager seems about to squander her hard-earned reputation as well. Since her arrest, her explanations and excuses have raised only new questions without resolving old ones.

Talking recently with the Wisconsin State Journal, Lautenschlager succinctly summed the primary challenge facing her now: "My bigger worry is ensuring I can restore my credibility as attorney general, because I think that there are important things we accomplished in my first year in office, and I'd like to continue that work."

Part of that work includes running a public integrity unit that is supposed to investigate activities uncomfortably similar to those she is suspected of doing herself. Her investigators presumably wouldn't let their targets off the hook with insufficient or contradictory explanations, and neither will we.

Records strongly indicate that the attorney general used her state car for personal or political events beyond what the state Ethics Board found in its recent investigation. That may not be justification to hound the attorney general from office. But the issue is relevant and worth pursuing because it raises questions about the attorney general's honesty and integrity. Comparing records to Lautenschlager's statements, one gets the uneasy feeling that the truth is still out there, somewhere:

◆ The attorney general gassed up her state car in Racine just hours after attending a Democratic Party fund-raiser in the same city, fuel receipts show. Lautenschlager insisted she didn't use the car to get there, but she also said she

always kept the card with her state-issued car. State rules forbid taking a state car to a political event.

◆ Lautenschlager refused to answer questions about specific trips that correspond to gas purchases until Wednesday, after ethics officials said they would reopen an inquiry.

◆ Receipts show Lautenschlager filled up her state car at least 21 times in her hometown of Fond du Lac, including on Christmas Day. A work day? The number of fill-ups also exceeds the number of commutes she has repaid, and her work calendar doesn't show her on official business on most of these days.

Perhaps Lautenschlager doesn't deserve blame for an incomplete investigation. The Ethics Board didn't bother to examine the gas receipts when it tried to figure out how the attorney general was using the car and what she owed taxpayers for her personal travel.

And surely, some partisans hope to keep controversy swirling around Lautenschlager as long as possible to maximize the political damage of her recent missteps. If she chooses to seek re-election, that campaign begins in little more than a year.

But that doesn't change the bottom line. The attorney general of Wisconsin is held to the highest expectations of honesty, integrity and openness for a reason: As the top enforcer of state laws, she needs to follow them. And it's not at all clear that she does.

Eau Claire Leader-Telegram April 12, 2004

## Commuting costs a private expense

*Use of the taxpayers' vehicles  
must have very specific limits*

**N**early two months after her drunken driving arrest, Wisconsin Attorney General Peg Lautenschlager is moving forward.

However, there's a question lingering in the minds of taxpayers who want to make sure every dollar sent to Madison is spent wisely and honestly.

No, this isn't about dredging up the details of what happened in Dodge County the night of Feb. 23, when a drunken Lautenschlager drove a state car into the ditch.

This is about what surfaced afterward, when it was learned that Lautenschlager routinely billed taxpayers for trips between Madison and her Fond du Lac home. In addition, her top deputy, Dan Bach, likewise claimed

### **Editorial**

34.2 cents a mile commuting from his home in southern Wisconsin.

Both claimed such billings were a misunderstanding about the rules. Lautenschlager repaid \$672, Bach repaid \$512, and each paid another \$250 for violating a law requiring those reimbursements.

Lautenschlager is paid nearly \$128,000 a year. That should be sufficient for her to cover her commuting expenses. If it's not, that's her problem, not the taxpayers.

The nagging question is how many other state employees get sweetheart deals with state cars that we never know about? And what does it say about the attitudes of state officials for such behavior to exist in the first place?

**The issue:**  
*State employees using taxpayers' cars to drive to and from work.*

**Our view:**  
*This should not be allowed, and the Legislature should act to ensure no one is doing it.*

A review of records by the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel found that drivers of some 1,100 of the 1,700 state vehicles assigned to employees reported no personal travel between January 2003 and February 2004.

"It's hard for me to comprehend that all those people aren't claiming any personal miles," said state Sen. Robert Cowles, R-Green Bay. "This thing begs for some major management restructuring."

One of the obligations of any job, elected or otherwise, is to pay your way to and from work. Once you get to work and need to travel as part of your job, that's when the company, or in this case the taxpayers, pay the bill.

This isn't complicated. Public officials using taxpayers' cars should be paid mileage based on the distance from the office only while on official business. Driving to and from your house before or after working hours should never be on the taxpayers' dime.

The revelation about Lautenschlager commuting on our dime erodes trust in government. A first-offense drunken driving arrest shows bad judgment. Claiming mileage for driving from your home to work, whether it's two miles or 200 miles, is dishonest.

The Legislature should clamp down immediately on the private use of taxpayers' cars. Failing to do so will further erode trust in government, and rightfully so.

— Don Huebscher, editor

ON WISCONSIN E-MAIL | JS ONLINE | TMJ4 | WTMJ | WKTI

Web search | Network Features

REAL ESTATE

JSOnline  
MILWAUKEE  
JOURNAL SENTINEL

Journal Sentinel Services | Classifieds | On Wisconsin LIVE | AdFinder | Yellow Pages

## Looking For Renters?

POWERED BY  
apartments.com

News Articles:  
Advanced Searches

Search

MILWAUKEE  
JOURNAL SENTINEL

Subscribe to the  
newsletter for  
updates on  
our online

JS Online Features List

ON WISCONSIN : JS ONLINE : NEWS : WISCONSIN :

E-MAIL | PRINT  
THIS STORY

NEWS  
WISCONSIN

- News
- Wisconsin
- Milwaukee
- Waukesha
- Ozaukee
- Washington
- Racine
- Editorials
- Crossroads
- Columnists
- Obituaries
- Letter to Editor
- Weather
- National Wire
- State Wire

## Lautenschlager's use of state car under more scrutiny

### Officials to compare new records with documents used in investigation

By PATRICK MARLEY  
pmarley@journalsentinel.com

Posted: April 14, 2004

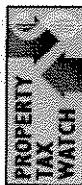
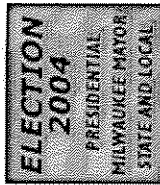
**Madison** - The state Ethics Board will review more records related to Attorney General Peg Lautenschlager's use of a state car in coming days, despite a settlement it reached with her last month.

Gas receipts and other records that were not previously made available to the board will be turned over this week for staff to review, the board's executive director, R. Roth Judd, said Wednesday.

Those records will be compared with other documents the board compiled during its investigation to make sure its findings were accurate, he said.

Shop the city's largest lighting showroom  
Find energy solutions for your home

RELIABLE  
QUALITY



Archived Features:

The Ethics Board found last month that Lautenschlager failed to reimburse the state \$672 for 1,969 personal miles logged on her state car during more than a year in office. She settled up that bill and paid a \$250 penalty on March 29 in an agreement reached with the panel.

"One very, very likely outcome is it will just corroborate everything we found earlier," Judd said in an interview. "We're going to check it and recheck it to make sure everything's accurate."

After briefing the Legislature's Joint Finance Committee on the matter, Judd told reporters that the board's findings were unlikely to change but that the new records may "lead in some other direction," which could potentially reopen the Ethics Board investigation.

Judd said he wants to review the gas receipts to make sure that a state car was not used to travel to any campaign-related event.

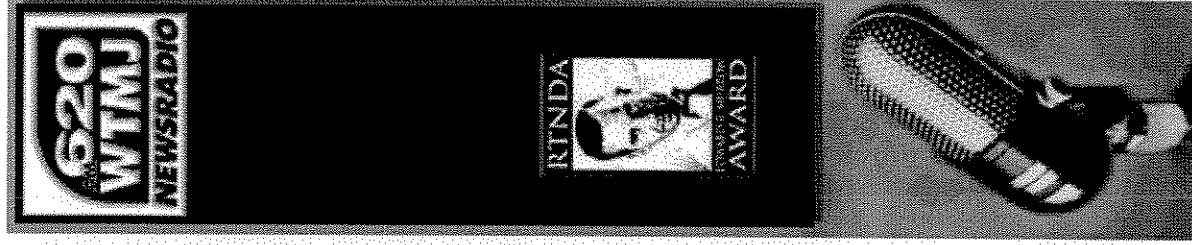
"I'd like to know the answer to that," Judd said, responding to a story in Wednesday's Wisconsin State Journal that tracked where Lautenschlager bought gas.

Lautenschlager said during a Wednesday morning public appearance and in a lengthy statement released in the afternoon that she had not used a state car for political appearances.

"At no time was the state vehicle used to attend political events," she said in her statement.

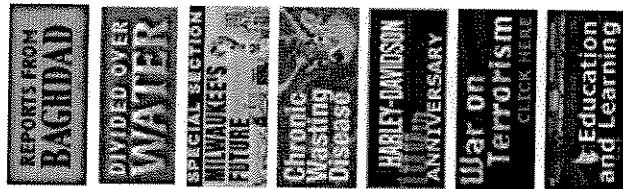
During the investigation, which developed after Lautenschlager was arrested for drunken driving in a state car during a Feb. 23 trip from Madison to her Fond du Lac home, the Ethics Board reviewed gas receipts that showed where she bought fuel, but not precisely when she bought it.

Investigators learned this week that the state Department of Administration could provide records that show exactly when purchases were made, rather than just when transactions on a state



MARKETPLACE

AdFinder



- [Jobs](#)
- [Cars](#)
- [Real Estate](#)
- [Rentals](#)
- [Personals](#)
- [General Classifieds](#)
- [Buy & Sell Tickets](#)
- [Contests](#)

credit card were posted to an account, as had earlier been provided.

The department is also turning over records related to repairs done on a 1999 Buick Park Avenue and possibly other state cars Lautenschlager drove, Ethics Board lawyer Jonathan Becker said.

Because Lautenschlager kept no record of business and personal trips she made, the Ethics Board required her to offer proof of all trips she made on state business. Using her official calendar, she was able to account for most of the roughly 23,000 miles she put on the car in 2003 and early 2004, Becker said.

Investigators reviewed the initial records on gas purchases but gave them little weight because the burden of proof was on Lautenschlager to show business miles, Becker and Judd said in separate interviews.

State law bars using state cars in most cases to attend campaign events for or against particular candidates. An alleged violation would be reviewed by the state Elections Board rather than the Ethics Board. Kevin Kennedy, executive director of the Elections Board, said no review of Lautenschlager was under way because no one has filed a sworn complaint about the matter.

*Steven Walters of the Journal Sentinel staff contributed to this report.*

From the April 15, 2004 editions of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

[BACK TO TOP](#)

**Need Help?**

- [Searching Archives](#)
- [Wireless Access](#)
- [Site Topics](#)
- [Table of Contents](#)
- [Contact Staff](#)
- [Subscriptions](#)

News Articles:  
Advanced Searches



Subscribe to the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel online

[JS Online Features List](#)

© Copyright 2004, Journal Sentinel Inc. All rights reserved.  
Produced by [Journal Interactive](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

Journal Sentinel Inc. is a subsidiary of [Journal Communications](#).

APPLETON - NEENAH - MENASHA, WISCONSIN

**THE POST-CRESCENT**  
www.postcrescent.com

**AESTHETICA**

Put your best face forward

NEWS | VIEWS | SPORTS | PACKERS | ENTERTAINMENT | CLASSIFIEDS | CARS | JOBS | HOMES | COMMUNITY | INFO

Appleton Weather

**55°F**  
Rain  
Forecast »

Manage My Subscription

**EZACCESS**

Homes »

## Editorial: Vehicle questions are part of bigger state problem

Posted Apr. 16, 2004

**VIEWS**

**WJ homes**

Search Now

Search for a Home

Jobs »

**careerbuilder**

Search for a job  
Post a resume  
First Jobs

Your Local Career Resource

Cars »

**Car shopping just got fun!**

**CARS.COM**

Classifieds »

The Appleton and surrounding areas Classified resource listing. Click Now!

Apartments »

Search our Site

**Subscriptions**  
Subscribe Now  
Manage My Subscription

**News**  
Local News  
Business  
Neenah-Menasha  
Heart of the Valley  
Obituaries  
Records  
Real Life, Real News

**Sports**  
PackersNews.com  
Timber Rattlers  
PGA Championship  
Racing Report  
Outdoors

**Views**  
Editorials  
Local Columnists  
Editorial Board  
Principles of Ethical Conduct  
Submit a letter

**Life & Style**  
Beerman  
8 Days, 8 Nights  
Food  
Homes

We hear sometimes from state workers and officials who are frustrated and puzzled by the public ingratitude or resentment they feel directed at them. These are usually sincere public servants who just want to protect the environment, pave the roads and see that justice is done. What, they wonder, is the public's problem?

Mileage is the problem, or more accurately, a symptom of the problem that, albeit unfairly, colors not just the specific culprits but all of state government — entitlement.

Over the last couple of weeks, newspapers around the state have followed up on questions that arose about use of state-owned vehicles after Atty. Gen. Peg Lautenschlager drove off the road in a state-issued car between her office in Madison and her home in Fond du Lac, about 70 miles away. Lautenschlager, who was legally intoxicated at the time, had never reimbursed the state for personal use of the vehicle.

Nor have most of the other state workers who enjoy the privilege, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported last week. Between January 2003 and February 2004, only about 40 percent of the people to whom the state has issued vehicles recorded any personal mileage. It sounds

Your Health

**Classifieds**

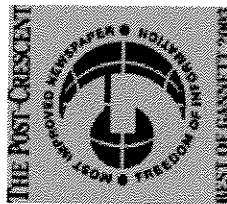
- CareerBuilder.com
- Cars.com
- WI Homes
- Apartments.com
- Classifieds
- Place Classified Ad
- Local Coupons
- National Coupons
- Personals

**Customer Service**

- Subscribe
- Contact Us

**Company Links**

- Gannett Co., Inc.
- USAToday.com
- USAWeekend.com
- Gannett Foundation



fishy, but it may be on the up and up. Unfortunately, the records are in such disarray, the Department of Administration is having a hard time figuring it out.

Meanwhile, in other vehicular news, the Lakeland Times in Minocqua reports that the state Department of Natural Resources' northern region has doubled its fleet in the last 10 years, at a cost of \$10 million. Among the purchases were five Chevy Suburbans purchased, the Times observed, the same year the DNR issued a "Climate Change Action Plan," which urged the state to lead by example and cut down on fuel-inefficient vehicles.

What taxpayers tend to pull from all of this is the sense that state workers and officials don't appreciate what their employers — the taxpayers — provide, especially compared with what most of them get from our employers, as in, "Company car? What's that?"

Then, pile on not just the possibility that somebody with good working conditions and pay, generous health insurance and pension benefits *and* a company car may be abusing the privilege, but the knowledge that because they didn't bother to fill out the paper work properly and their overseers didn't bother to make sure they did, nobody can tell.

And, honestly, when the DNR was spending more than \$14 million on vehicles statewide over the last three years, was it thinking how that would play with farmers who wring 200,000 miles out of a pickup truck? Or the single mother who gets by with a 1985 Ford Escort?

That's the public's problem.

**apartments.com**  
 Select a region  
 Businesses »  
**BizWizard**  
 Start Search

PICK YOUR  
**FRIENDS**  
 AND WIN!  
 Click here &  
 enter to win a  
 DVD box set of  
**FRIENDS**  
 seasons 1-7!

CHAIR:  
Energy and Utilities Committee

MEMBER:  
Higher Education and Tourism  
Joint Committee on Audit  
State Building Commission

NE  
WS  
REL  
EAS  
E

**ROBERT L. COWLES**  
Wisconsin State Senator • 2nd Senate District

For More Information Contact:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
April 19, 2004

Senator Cowles or Todd Stuart  
at 1-800-334-1465

**Cowles Renews Call for Audit of State Fleet**  
*Doyle Purchasing Freeze a First Step*

**Madison** – State Senator Robert Cowles (R-Green Bay) today renewed his call for an audit of state fleet purchases and organization. On Friday night, Governor Doyle announced a freeze on the purchase of state vehicles and also ordered all employees who put low mileage on state cars and trucks to justify keeping the vehicles. However, the governor's office reportedly responded "coolly" to the audit request. "I think the freeze is a good first step," said Cowles. "But I think the taxpayers deserve a comprehensive accounting. If the administration has nothing to hide, they should welcome an independent, outside review."

In early April, Cowles requested a comprehensive audit of the state fleet by the nonpartisan Legislative Audit Bureau. The audit could document the effectiveness and efficiency of vehicle procurement in addition to exploring the accuracy of mileage reporting. The audit should look at the overall number of vehicles and the mix of large versus small vehicles in the fleet. Cowles also requested an update on the progress and time to completion for a Department of Administration (DOA) plan to consolidate the state fleet management programs. "The state could save between \$5-8 million on fleet costs," said Cowles.

The State of Wisconsin owns and maintains a fleet of over 7,000 vehicles for use by employees on official state business (the state employs roughly 66,000 workers). The vehicles are divided up into four major fleets, which are operated by the Department of Administration, Department of Transportation, DNR, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The Department of Corrections and the Department of Health and Family Services also operate smaller fleets. It has been reported that one state agency alone spent \$18 million on vehicles since 1999 – at a rate of \$17,000 each day in 2002.

"At a time when we are seeing record gas prices and state budget deficits, the state was buying a ton of fuel-inefficient, expensive vehicles," said Cowles. "Was this the best use of our resources?"

Senator Cowles is a member of the Joint Legislative Audit Committee, and has submitted a request for an audit of the state fleet by the nonpartisan Legislative Audit Bureau.

#30#

Office:  
Room 122 South State Capitol  
P.O. Box 7882  
Madison, WI 53707-7882  
608-266-0484

Toll-Free Hotline: 1-800-334-1465  
TDD Hotline: 1-800-228-2115  
Fax: 608-267-3304

District:  
300 W. St. Joseph Street  
Green Bay, WI 54301-2328  
920-448-5092  
Fax: 920-448-5093



ON WISCONSIN E-MAIL | JS ONLINE | TMJ4 | WTMJ | WKTI

Web search GO | Network Features

REAL ESTATE

JSOnline  
MILWAUKEE  
JOURNAL SENTINEL

Journal Sentinel Services Classifieds On Wisconsin LIVE AdFinder Yellow Pages

IS YOUR CREDIT PREVENTING YOU FROM OWNING A NEW OR USED CAR? [click here](#)

News Articles:  
Advanced Searches

Search

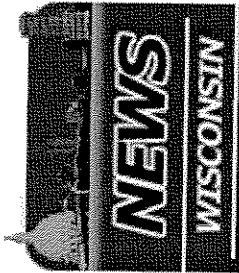
MILWAUKEE  
JOURNAL SENTINEL

Subscribe to the  
newsletter -  
enter online

JS Online Features List

ON WISCONSIN : JS ONLINE : NEWS : WISCONSIN :

E-MAIL | PRINT  
THIS STORY



RELAND  
WISCONSIN

Shop the city's largest  
lighting showroom  
Find energy solutions  
for your home

## Doyle freezes vehicle buying

### Aide to Lautenschlager questions rule standards

By PATRICK MARLEY and STEVEN WALTERS  
pmarley@journal sentinel.com

Posted: April 16, 2004

**Madison** - Gov. Jim Doyle on Friday froze the purchase of state vehicles and ordered all employees who put low mileage on state cars and trucks to justify why they should keep them.

Also Friday, a top aide to Attorney General Peg Lautenschlager questioned whether Doyle's Department of Administration can effectively administer uniform and fair standards for the state's fleet.

Doyle's orders come a week after the release of records showing that about six in 10 employees with state cars recorded no personal miles on them during a 14-month period. Those records also suggest more than 1,000 of about 1,700 employees with personally assigned vehicles averaged fewer than 16,000 miles a year, the minimum required for most employees to be assigned a car.

Special Features:

- News
- Wisconsin
- Milwaukee
- Waukesha
- Ozaukee
- Washington
- Racine
- Editorials
- Crossroads
- Columnists
- Obituaries
- Letter to Editor
- Weather
- National Wire
- State Wire

Doyle was in northeastern Wisconsin Friday to sign bills and attend the funeral of Marine Pfc. Ryan Jerabek, but he issued a statement late in the day announcing the freeze and calling for a further push to reduce the state's fleet of cars.

"Over the years, state government has bought too many new cars, allowed too many personally assigned vehicles, been too lax about ensuring people pay for personal use of state cars, and too careless about record-keeping," Doyle said in his statement. "But it is a new day in Wisconsin."

Doyle pared back vehicle purchases when he took office in January 2003 and forced cabinet secretaries to give up the cars assigned to their predecessors. During his first year in office, he cut 132 vehicles from the state fleet, bringing it down as of January to 7,228 passenger vehicles, light- and medium-duty trucks and law enforcement vehicles.

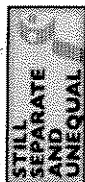
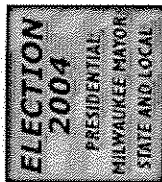
### Probe under way

The purchasing moratorium will stand until Administration Secretary Marc Marotta completes reviews of how to reduce the state fleet and whether employees are properly reimbursing taxpayers for personal trips on state cars. Both should be done within 30 days, said Doyle aide Dan Leistikow.

Marotta launched the review of the personal use of state vehicles four days after Lautenschlager was arrested Feb. 24 for drunken driving in Dodge County while traveling in a state car from Madison to her Fond du Lac home. The arrest raised questions about Lautenschlager's personal use of the 1999 Buick Park Avenue, and a month later she reimbursed the state \$672 and paid a \$250 penalty in a settlement with the state Ethics Board.

Some employees who travel fewer than 16,000 miles a year on state business still qualify for state cars, such as highway workers who might have to respond to emergencies or those who need special equipment to perform their jobs.

Archived Features:



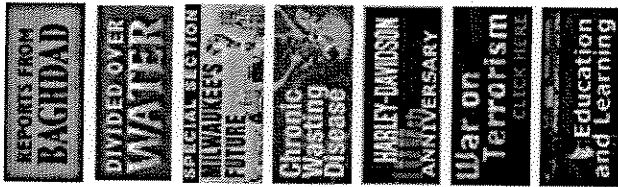


APRIL 7 - MAY 9  
2004

CALL 414•224•9490  
OR BUY  
SINGLE TICKETS ONLINE  
24/7

MARKETPLACE

AdFinder



- [Jobs](#)
- [Cars](#)
- [Real Estate](#)
- [Rentals](#)
- [Personals](#)
- [General Classifieds](#)
- [Buy & Sell Tickets](#)
- [Contests](#)

Also, various state agencies have reported over the past week that some vehicles assigned to individuals actually stay at state offices, where multiple employees use them. Marotta has said those reports point to record-keeping problems, which Doyle vowed to correct.

Low-mileage vehicles "raise immediate questions because they're below the standard," Leistikow said. "Those are the ones that need to be looked at immediately."

### Oversight hit

Meanwhile, Deputy Attorney General Dan Bach on Friday accused Doyle appointees of being unable to fairly and effectively administer the state's vehicle fleet. In a letter, Bach told Marotta his agency's current vehicle-use rules and enforcement patterns are "schizophrenic."

Bach, like Lautenschlager, paid a \$250 forfeiture last month for personal use of a state car. In his letter, he questioned why state rules specify that van pool drivers, University of Wisconsin System chancellors and "employees who are on call 24 hours a day" do not have to reimburse state government for commuting miles. Prison wardens are also considered "24-hour" employees who can commute in state cars.

"Do our Department of Justice criminal investigators, or the state's 'top cop,' qualify for this exception?" Bach added, referring to Lautenschlager, who like Doyle is a Democrat.

Bach said the state Justice Department was reviewing its own rules over the use of state cars, and now requires all of its workers to keep driving logs. But Bach said the Department of Administration exemptions for some workers "blur the distinction between personal and business travel."

Bach also asked whether any state employees found to have improperly commuted in state vehicles will be the subject of state

### Need Help?

- [Searching Archives](#)
- [Wireless Access](#)
- [Site Topics](#)
- [Table of Contents](#)
- [Contact Staff](#)
- [Subscriptions](#)

Ethics Board investigations, like he and Lautenschlager were.

"Fair and consistent treatment for all employees must be the objective," Bach said.

Maybe, Bach added, the job of keeping track of Justice Department vehicles should be shifted to that agency.

"It seems logical that a law enforcement agency is better suited to drafting rules governing the permitted use of law enforcement vehicles than a department with no law enforcement component of experience," he wrote.

Leistikow said Marotta's agency has made it clear that employees must reimburse taxpayers for commuting in state vehicles.

In a swipe at Lautenschlager and Bach, Leistikow added: "Both the administration and the Ethics Board have made it very clear to the Department of Justice that taxpayers shouldn't have to pay for an employee's personal use of a state car."

Lawmakers have also raised alarms over state cars, with state Sen. Robert Cowles (R-Green Bay) calling for an audit last week of the state fleet. Other legislators have embraced the idea but have said it may be difficult to schedule because of a heavy workload.

Leistikow responded coolly to the prospect of an audit.

"It's clear that in previous years there was rampant overspending on state cars, and an audit won't get that money back," Leistikow said. "The solution is to stop the overspending and start rejecting requests for new cars, and the governor is doing just that."

From the April 17, 2004 editions of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

**JSOnline**  
MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL

Journal Sentinel Services Classifieds On Wisconsin LIVE AdFinder Yellow Pages

**Fast? Yes.**

News Articles:  Search

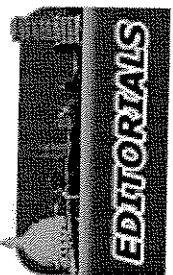


Subscribe to the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel Online

JS Online Features List

ON WISCONSIN : JS ONLINE : NEWS : EDITORIALS :

E-MAIL | PRINT THIS STORY



**SAVING UNCLE SAM'S MONEY**  
Shop the city's largest lighting showroom  
Find energy solutions for your home

## Editorial: Getting a grip on wheels

From the Journal Sentinel

Posted: April 15, 2004

Wisconsin needs to get a grip on its fleet of state-owned cars. It may very well be that too many state employees have been assigned government cars and that some of those employees are not properly reimbursing the state for their personal use of the cars.

But one cannot be sure because the state's system of tracking reimbursement and mileage is a mess. Administration Secretary Marc Marotta is trying to get a handle on the situation but concedes that it's tough because the state lacks a centralized system of record keeping. That deficiency has forced state agencies to track the use of government cars in a variety of ways, which, besides being inefficient, opens the door to abuse.

Preliminary state records released last week indicate that, over a 14-month period, more than 60% of the 1,712 employees assigned government cars paid no personal mileage charges. Two University of Wisconsin chancellors are listed as not reimbursing the state for personal miles. Trouble is, other records and interviews suggest that

- News
- Wisconsin
- Milwaukee
- Waukesha
- Ozaukee
- Washington
- Racine
- Editorials
- Crossroads
- Columnists
- Obituaries
- Letter to Editor
- Weather
- National Wire
- State Wire

Special Features:

WISCONSIN  
PRESIDENTIAL  
DEBATE 2004  
ARCHIVED  
COVERAGE

ELECTION  
2004  
PRESIDENTIAL  
MILWAUKEE MAYOR  
STATE AND LOCAL

EDITORIALS  
ON THE 2004  
MAYORAL RACE

STILL  
SEPARATE  
AND  
UNEQUAL

MADE IN  
CHINA  
SPECIAL ADVERTISING

ONE MILE  
photo series

PROPERTY  
TAX  
WATCH

WAR IN IRAQ  
ANALYSIS, OPINIONS,  
ARCHIVED COVERAGE

CROSSROADS  
analysis, opinions,  
views on the news

PHOTO  
OF THE  
DAY

3, 2, 1  
Takes  
5  
A DAILY USA

Archived  
Features:

the chancellors in fact did make those payments. Such discrepancies underscore the need for a uniform system to ensure that state rules are being followed.

Marotta began an investigation in February to determine whether employees assigned cars are reimbursing the state for personal mileage. The inquiry was begun after Attorney General Peg Lautenschlager was arrested for drunken driving, raising questions about her use of a state car for personal business. Last month, the state Ethics Board ordered Lautenschlager and her top aide to reimburse the state for personal miles they racked up on their state-owned cars and fined each of them \$250.

Since Marotta asked all state agencies in February to review the vehicles assigned to employees under their jurisdiction, workers have given up 80 cars. That fact alone suggests agencies may have gotten carried away in assigning government cars to employees. What's more, records indicate that 1,185 workers with state cars appear to have logged low mileage in recent months despite state guidelines that say the vehicles are intended primarily for workers who travel heavily on state business - usually, 16,000 miles a year.

While those two developments raise valid questions about who really needs a state car, the lack of sound record keeping makes it difficult to reach intelligent conclusions. The obvious answer is to improve record keeping as soon as possible. Fortunately, Marotta and his boss, Gov. Jim Doyle, are making this a priority. It's too bad that it took the arrest of Lautenschlager to get the machine into high gear.

From the April 16, 2004 editions of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

[BACK TO TOP](#)

The Top 50  
*The Cripple of Fishman*  
APRIL 7 - MAY 9  
2004  
CALL 414-224-9490  
OR BUY  
SINGLE TICKETS ONLINE  
24/7  
TARGET PLACE

AdFinder

REAL Cities

Network Features

GO

Web search

Journal Sentinel Services

Classifieds

On Wisconsin LIVE

AdFinder

Yellow Pages

JS Online

MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL

Student Loan Consolidation - you can lock in rates as low as 2.875%. Student Loan Consolidation will lower your payments by as much as 50% OR MORE. No Credit Checks or Co-Signers AND No Application Fees or Charges. CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFORMATION

News Articles: Advanced Searches

Search

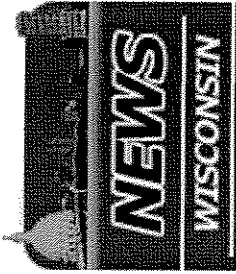
MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL

Subscribe to the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel online

JS Online Features List

ON WISCONSIN : JS ONLINE : NEWS : WISCONSIN :

E-MAIL | PRINT THIS STORY



Shop the city's largest lighting showroom

Find energy solutions for your home

# Despite deficit, DNR had '02 vehicle-buying spree

## Surge offset past restraints, official says

By PATRICK MARLEY  
[pmarley@journalssentinel.com](mailto:pmarley@journalssentinel.com)

Posted: April 18, 2004

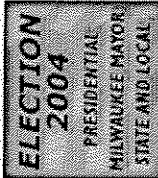
**Madison** - As a \$1.1 billion state deficit loomed two years ago, the Department of Natural Resources went on a car- and truck-buying binge, spending 44% more on purchases than in the previous year.

In 2002, while most state agencies clamped down on expenses, the DNR spent \$6.1 million on 278 new cars and trucks, compared with \$4.2 million spent on 203 vehicles in 2001. The increased spending came despite warnings from lawmakers and then-Gov. Scott McCallum that an even larger shortfall was possible for 2003 through 2005.

### DNR Spending

Special Features:

- News
- Wisconsin
- Milwaukee
- Waukesha
- Ozaukee
- Washington
- Racine
- Editorials
- Crossroads
- Columnists
- Obituaries
- Letter to Editor
- Weather
- National Wire
- State Wire



Archived Features:

Documents show that vehicle purchases fell sharply in 2003, to \$1.7 million, after Gov. Jim Doyle took office.

Some lawmakers want to know more about the state's car-buying habits, highlighted in documents obtained by the Journal Sentinel through the state's open records law.

Sen. Robert Cowles (R-Green Bay) called for an audit of the state's entire fleet of vehicles this month after the Lakeland Times in Minocqua reported that the DNR spent more than \$10.4 million over 10 years on vehicles for its northern region, one of five the agency manages.

"It's like, 'Don't you people connect the dots?'" Cowles said of the agency's purchases during the fiscal crunch. "I'm expecting to find millions in savings (for all state agencies) when this is all said and done."

The request for an audit comes as Doyle performs his own review of state vehicles. Administration Secretary Marc Marotta's analysis of the state fleet has been under way since January but was expanded after Attorney General Peg Lautenschlager was arrested Feb. 24 for drunken driving in a state car.

Subsequent questions raised about her personal use of a 1999 Buick Park Avenue led Marotta to investigate whether state employees are properly reimbursing taxpayers for personal trips in state cars.

In a settlement with the state Ethics Board last month, Lautenschlager

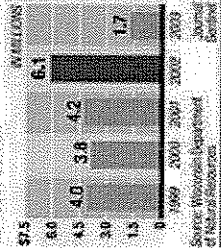
DNR SPENDING

VEHICLE PURCHASES

Vehicle purchases by the state Department of Natural Resources, as reported in 2002, the same year the state took a deficit of more than \$1 billion.

The numbers include cars, sport utility vehicles, light trucks and heavy equipment.

MONEY SPENT ON VEHICLES BY DNR



Source: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Graphic/Journal Sentinel

Vehicle Purchases

More Vehicles

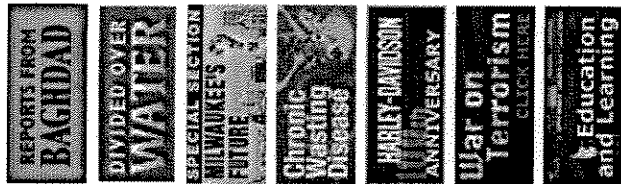
As the DNR's spending on vehicles increased, so did the number of vehicles bought. The number bought, by year:

- 1999: 196
- 2000: 183
- 2001: 203
- 2002: 278
- 2003: 32

Source: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

AdFinder





- [Jobs](#)
- [Cars](#)
- [Real Estate](#)
- [Rentals](#)
- [Personals](#)
- [General Classifieds](#)
- [Buy & Sell Tickets](#)
- [Contests](#)

agreed to reimburse the state \$672 for personal miles put on her car and pay a \$250 penalty.

Initial records from Marotta's inquiry show that over 60% of the more than 1,700 employees assigned cars from January 2003 through February 2004 recorded no personal miles on their state cars. More than 1,000 of the employees logged fewer than 16,000 miles annually, the minimum required under state rules in most cases.

Marotta has questioned the accuracy of the records, and Doyle on Friday put a freeze on new vehicle purchases and ordered managers to justify in writing the continued use of any personally assigned vehicle that hasn't logged 16,000 miles in the past year.

Legislators do not appropriate specific amounts to state agencies for buying vehicles. Instead, they authorize large sums for staff and equipment, giving individual departments broad discretion to spend the funds as they see fit. Any vehicle purchases must be approved by the Department of Administration, however.

**Need Help?**

- [Searching Archives](#)
- [Wireless Access](#)
- [Site Topics](#)
- [Table of Contents](#)
- [Contact Staff](#)
- [Subscriptions](#)

Unlike many agencies, the DNR is funded largely with user fees, such as hunting and fishing licenses, rather than taxes. Nonetheless, as with virtually all state operations, it has been hit with deep spending cuts as lawmakers and the governor pare back expenses.

McCallum, a Republican, took over as governor for Tommy G. Thompson in 2001 as the state's fiscal picture rapidly worsened. McCallum said that he tried to trim spending without hurting state operations, noting that rollbacks in equipment purchases or maintenance could have created a backlog of expenses that would come due in future years.

"I didn't want to make decisions that, short term, looked like they were saving money but, long term, weren't good for the taxpayer," he said.

But he offered no answer for why the DNR's vehicle purchases would spike during a time of such tight finances, saying he did not have

access to records that would explain the costs. In July 2002, as the DNR wrapped up its summer buying spree, McCallum ordered all state agencies to accelerate the sale of older cars to help fill government coffers.

Darrell Bazzell, then the DNR secretary and now a University of Wisconsin-Madison vice chancellor, distanced himself from the purchases, saying in an interview, "I was not involved in looking at individual vehicle requests."

The department spent just under \$20 million from 1999 to 2003, according to the records. The annual vehicle costs hovered around \$4 million from 1999 to 2001 and then shot up to more than \$6 million in 2002 before dropping off in 2003.

The size of the department's fleet did not substantially increase during that time because the department regularly sells old vehicles. In 1999, the department maintained 1,555 vehicles. Last year its fleet stood at 1,561.

The ramped-up Wisconsin DNR purchases resulted in part from spending restraints imposed in earlier years under Thompson, said Vance Rayburn, who heads the DNR's Division of Customer and Employee Services.

"It was sort of a makeup for previous years," he said. "I think it's sort of an anomaly of the age of the fleet and the need for replacement."

Purchases of cars and light trucks increased by more than 50% between 2001 and 2002. In 2002, the agency bought 75 cars, up from 50 in 2001, and 164 light trucks, up from 104.

The records show that the agency spent \$558,182 for 11 pieces of heavy equipment, such as dump trucks, in 2002, compared with \$374,062 the previous year. Purchases of sport utility vehicles declined in 2002, from 42 to 28.

In sharp contrast to the 2002 purchases, almost all the money used to buy vehicles in 2003 - \$1.5 million of \$1.7 million - went toward heavy trucks. The department also bought 14 cars last year, but no light trucks or SUVs.

"We're doing things differently now," said Rayburn, who joined the agency last year.

DNR officials welcome the audit proposed by Cowles, Rayburn said.

"We think we're making good business decisions, and we don't have any problem being audited," he said.

The last time the DNR's fleet was reviewed, in 2000, consultant DMG-Maximus reported that "overall, DNR has an effective fleet management program," but called oversight of the fleet too decentralized.

"This fragmentation of fleet management responsibilities obviously complicates the task of controlling, let alone optimizing, fleet management activities," it said. "A clear indication of this is that DNR was unable to provide us with complete cost data for its fleet operations during the course of this study."

Cowles expressed frustration at the lack of a move to centralize all state vehicle purchases in light of the earlier study and a subsequent request from the Legislature's Joint Finance Committee.

"We asked for this whole problem to be fixed, and it hasn't," he said.

From the April 19, 2004 editions of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

[BACK TO TOP](#)

News Articles:  
Advanced Searches



Subscribe to the  
Milwaukee Journal  
Sentinel online

[JS Online Features List](#)

**Coming Tuesday**  
Columnist John Leo

Editor: Tim Kelley, (608) 252-6110  
artin, Sunny Schubert, (608) 252-6107

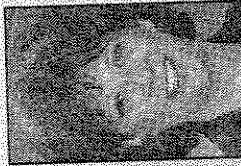
**GUEST COLUMN**

## WSJ pursues 'character assassination'

By Peggy A. Lautenschlager

Given recent articles and an editorial in the Wisconsin State Journal impugning my integrity, I feel compelled to set the record straight.

As an elected official, I acknowledge the responsibility of the media to report the news. I did not, for instance, complain about the coverage of my recent citation for drunken driving. I accepted the punishment and made my apologies for what was a very bad choice. Your recent coverage and editorial related to my state car usage, however, was an outrageous attempt at character assassination and it can not go unanswered.



**Lautenschlager**

For the record, I was quick to publicly apologize for drinking and driving. I then cooperated fully with a subsequent investigation into the use of my assigned state vehicle conducted by the State Ethics Board. I publicly accepted its determination that reimbursement for some mileage was owed. I was open and honest with the media and the public on both matters.

In your recent coverage and editorial related to state vehicle use, you seem all too eager to suggest that by cooperating fully with the Ethics Board and accepting their findings, my honesty and integrity are justifiably called into question. I am at a complete loss to understand how such an outrageous premise made its way into your paper. It is untrue. It is irresponsible. It was an incredibly unjustified cheap shot that marks a new low for journalists.

A brief recap seems in order. As you should know, but likely will not report, a thorough investigation of the use of my state car was conducted by the Ethics Board. I complied with every request for information made by the board. I met with its investigator and lawyers personally to answer questions. They — not I — appropriately determined the number of miles for which reimbursement was owed. I accepted the determination of the board without question. I promptly paid what it determined was the proper amount.

I would suggest that if you disagree with the board's findings, you complain to the board. Calling me a liar

because of what you perceive to be inadequacies in its investigation is outrageous.

My sincere attempts to recreate events that happened more than a year ago and about which there is little documentation are treated with skepticism and disbelief. For example, on the one hand, your reporters wish to make the case that I travel almost nightly to my home in Fond du Lac, a trip of about 90 minutes. On the other hand, these same reporters view with disbelief the feasibility of my making the same-distanced trip from Racine to Fond du Lac on a Sunday evening when several of my children were home from college. (I attended a fund-raiser at 5 p.m. on Sunday evening, leaving early, and returned to Racine the following morning at 7 a.m. It is clear that your reporters have conclusions they wish to draw, and misinterpret the facts in ways which afford them to reach these conclusions. This is not journalism.

I understand that at least one of your reporters is miffed because I was not available to meet with him recently to discuss his "findings." His hurt ego should not be the driving force behind stories that are better suited for tabloids.

Regrettably, there is probably nothing that your paper can do to redress this situation. I am hopeful, however, that it will never happen again. Your readers deserve better.

Lautenschlager is Wisconsin's attorney general.

# Wisconsin State Journal

- WSJ HOME
- ANNOUNCEMENTS
- BOOK OF BUSINESS
- CLASSIFIEDS SEARCH
- ENTERTAINMENT
- PHOTO REPRINTS
- STORY ARCHIVES
- CONTACT STAFF
- EMAIL A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## OPINION

### State needs new rules of the road

9:06 PM 4/19/04

EMAIL STORY PRINT STORY

**Thanks, Peg Lautenschlager, for putting the spotlight on state vehicle use and abuse.** Taxpayers will reap some benefit from Attorney General Peg Lautenschlager's questionable driving habits: The state is tightening up on use of state cars and taking steps to make sure all state workers pay back taxpayers for personal travel. The state might be able to reduce its costly car fleet as a result. <

Lautenschlager used a state car to commute from Madison to her Fond du Lac home until she drove it into a Dodge County ditch and was arrested for drunken driving in February. She pleaded guilty and lost her license for a year. <

The incident has prompted Ethics Board reviews of her personal travel in a state car, and more significantly, brought scrutiny of how and why state workers get such a perk at all. Buying cars for workers who travel extensively to do their job makes taxpayer sense because it's cheaper than paying mileage. But taxpayer-supported driving privileges appear too easily available. <

Evidence indicates that too many workers have been handed the keys to state-purchased vehicles: More than 1,000 state employees drive their cars fewer than 16,000 miles a year, which is supposed to be the minimum to qualify for the car in the first place. The state hasn't held workers accountable for personal use of state cars either - in part because careless record keeping makes it hard to tell why workers are using the vehicles. <

The administration of Gov. Jim Doyle correctly notes that in recent years, state government has bought too many cars overall. Doyle takes credit for reducing the state fleet by 132 cars and saving \$26.3 million by rejecting most agency requests for new vehicles. However, curtailing car-buying was one of the easier calls to make among choices facing a deficit-plagued state government last year, and the new scrutiny Doyle has pledged is long overdue. <

### Reader Services


- Subscribe
- Renew your subscription
- Temporary stop
- Carrier opportunities
- Newspapers in Education
- > More reader services

### Advertiser services:

- Place a Classified ad
- Media Kit
- Digital file requirements
- > More advertiser services

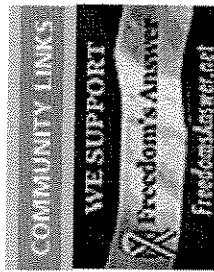
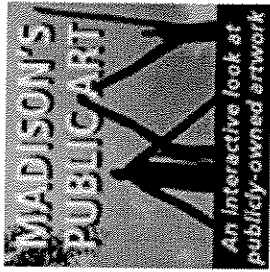
### SPECIAL REPORTS

**Subscribe online**  
FOR HOME DELIVERY



### NEWS FROM AP

- Lawyer: Guantanamo Is a 'Lawless Enclave'
- Iraqi Forces Move Back Into Fallujah
- Columbine Marks Anniversary of Shooting
- GOP: Rule Would Make More Eligible for OT
- Congress to Open Hearings on Iraq Policy



- [Answer Book](#)
- [City of Madison](#)
- [Dane County](#)
- [State of Wisconsin](#)
- [University of Wisconsin](#)
- [Madison School District](#)
- [Wisconsin Dept. of Tourism](#)
- [State election maps](#)
- [Community pages](#)

The governor has ordered state agencies to justify their personally assigned vehicles and he has frozen state car purchases until the review is complete. Meanwhile, the state must develop a better way to keep track of personal and overall use to make better choices in assigning vehicles. <

Most of all, if the attorney general can claim ignorance of rules governing the use of state vehicles, it's clear that employees need some fresh instruction on when and why they can use state cars. <

[Back to top](#)

[WSJ Home](#) | [Announcements](#) | [Classifieds](#) | [Entertainment](#)

[Photo Reprints](#) | [Story Archives](#) | [Contact Staff](#)

Copyright © 2003 Wisconsin State Journal

[Jordan's King Snubs Bush Over Israel Plan](#)

[Jailed Rapper Close to \\$3M Record Deal](#)

[Scissors Are Left in Woman After Surgery](#)

[Stocks Mixed As Market Awaits Greenspan](#)

[LeBron James Wins NBA Rookie of the Year](#)

SHEBOYGAN, WISCONSIN

**The Sheboygan Press**  
www.sheboygan-press.com

HOME    NEWS    CLASSIFIEDS    FEATURES    PACKERS    CUSTOMER SERVICE    CONTACT US

Sheboygan Weather  
43°F  
Sunny  
Forecast »

Printable page

Opinion index  
Posted Apr. 20, 2004

**MEYER  
MOTORS**  
TOLL FREE  
888-855-4328

## Editorial: Consistent policies, better record-keeping needed for state cars

This state needs consistent policies and far better record-keeping for its fleet of vehicles.

This is the obvious conclusion from the almost daily reports of inconsistencies and misuse of the cars and trucks following the arrest of Attorney General Peg Lautenschlager for drunken driving after she drove her state-owned car into a ditch in Dodge County Feb. 24. The state Ethics Board ordered Lautenschlager and her top aide in the Justice Department to reimburse the state for mileage and to pay fines of \$250 apiece for misuse of state vehicles. Among other reports since then:

- Over a 14-month period, more than 60 percent of the 1,712 employees assigned government cars paid no personal mileage charges.
- More than 1,000 of the employees logged less than 16,000 miles per year, the minimum required under state rules for most of the cars.
- The Department of Natural Resources doubled its fleet in its Northern Region, at a cost of \$10 million. Five of the vehicles the DNR purchased were Chevy Suburbans, which have high emissions, the same year the DNR issued a "Climate Change Action Plan."

Search our Site

- News**
- Local News
  - Sports
  - Packers
  - Outdoors
  - Business
  - Opinion
  - Obituaries
  - Records
  - Corrections
  - Milestones
  - Community
  - Technology
  - Space.com
  - Weather
  - Pit Stop Picks
  - Real Life, Real News

- Classifieds**
- CareerBuilder.com
  - Cars.com
  - Homes
  - Apartments.com
  - Classifieds
  - Place Classified Ad
  - National Coupons
  - Personals

- Features**
- Features
  - Community Calendar
  - Sheboygan County
  - Scrapbook
  - Lottery

**Customer Service**

Subscribe

EZ Access

News Stands

EZpay

Advertising Info

Online Info

Newspapers In

Education

About Us

Newspaper History

**Contact Us**

Submit News

Submit Sports

Submit Business

Submit Letter to the

Editor

Phone Directory

Site Comments

**Wisconsin News**

Appleton Post-

Crescent

Fond Du Lac

Reporter

Green Bay Press

Gazette

Manitowoc Herald

Times

Marshfield News

Herald

Oshkosh

Northwestern

Sheboygan Press

Stevens Point

Journal

Wausau Daily Herald

Wisconsin Rapids

Daily Tribune

**Company Links**

Gannett Co., Inc.

USAToday.com

USAWeekend.com

Gannett Foundation



• The DNR went on a buying spree in 2002, spending \$6.1 million on new cars and trucks, 44 percent more than the previous year, at a time when the state was facing a \$1.1 billion state deficit.

• Lautenschlager made a trip to Racine for a political event, but did not reimburse the state for the mileage.

To his credit, Gov. Jim Doyle cut purchases of new vehicles substantially when he took office in 2003, and required cabinet secretaries to give up cars assigned to their predecessors. Secretary of Administration Marc Marotta started investigating how employees reimburse the state for personal mileage after Lautenschlager's arrest. Since Marotta requested state agencies to review assignments of vehicles, workers have given up 80 vehicles. Doyle last week imposed a moratorium on all vehicle purchases until Marotta's probe is completed.

When the probe is completed, the administration needs to set fair and uniform standards for use of the fleet. Strict record-keeping should be required.

These steps should assure that some agencies don't misuse the vehicles, and are likely to result in substantial savings for taxpayers.

PICK YOUR FRIENDS AND WIN! Click here and enter to win a DVD box set of FRIENDS seasons 1-7! Vote for your all-time favorite episodes and you could win a Friends party pack, a Friends book, or the Grand Prize—a boxed set of Friends seasons 1-7 on DVD, valued at \$225. PICK YOUR FRIENDS AND WIN!





---

[Front Page](#) | [News](#) | [Packers](#) | [Sports](#) | [Features](#) | [Homes](#)  
[Autos](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Classifieds](#) | [Contact Us](#)


---

Copyright © 2004


Use of this site signifies your agreement to the [Terms of Service](#).

Send your questions and comments to [Gannett Wisconsin Online](#).

OSHKOSH, WISCONSIN




NEWS | SPORTS | PACKERS | ENTERTAINMENT | CLASSIFIEDS | CARS | JOBS | HOMES | COMMUNITY | INFO



Click here and enter to win a DVD box set of FRIENDS seasons 1-7!

Oshkosh Weather

49°F  
Fog  
Forecast >



Search our Site

- [Main Page](#)
- [Local News](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Packers](#)
- [Business](#)
- [Features](#)
- [Columns](#)
- [Neighbors](#)
- [Opinions](#)
- [Obituaries](#)
- [Births](#)
- [Deaths](#)
- [Marriages](#)
- [Community Info](#)
- [Classifieds](#)
- [Autos](#)
- [Homes](#)
- [Jobs](#)
- [Weather](#)
- [Contacts & Info](#)



OPINION

Posted Apr. 21, 2004

## Editorial: DNR fleet grows while pocketbooks shrink

Anyone who thinks Wisconsin government has cut too much spending in recent years has just been proven horribly wrong by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Two years ago, under threat of a massive \$1.1 billion budget deficit and ineffective leadership in the statehouse, Wisconsin recoiled from the prospect that severe budget cuts were imminent. Some cuts were made, most notably in the university system and funding for local government.

Now, a Milwaukee Journal Sentinel investigation found that in 2002 the DNR spiked its spending on cars and trucks by 44 percent over 2001. Administrators justified the increases due to shortfalls they experienced under the Gov. Tommy Thompson era of the 1990s. That's odd considering a year 2000 survey of the DNR fleet found it "effective."

Some may argue that in the context of billion dollar budgets, the vehicle spending is hardly notable. The problem with that argument is that the free spending attitude is not limited to one state agency. It exists across the board and throughout



the state budget.

Gov. Jim Doyle has enacted some reforms and the Republican-led Legislature has nipped-and-tucked at the state spending issue. This example shows just how bloated state government is and how much more could be cut without a loss in core services.

[Back to Top](#)



---

[Front Page](#) | [News](#) | [Packers](#) | [Sports](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Obituaries](#)  
[Autos](#) | [Homes](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Classifieds](#) | [Contact Us](#)

Copyright © 2004

Use of this site signifies your agreement to the [Terms of Service](#).  
Send your questions and comments to [Gannett Wisconsin Online](#).