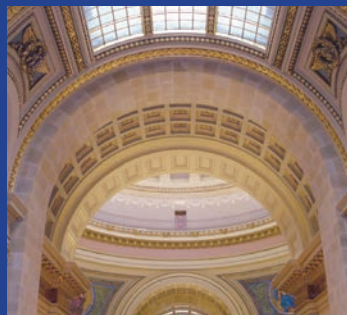


**Report 20-15  
September 2020**

# **Wisconsin Retirement System Reporting for Participating Employers**

Calendar Year 2019

STATE OF WISCONSIN



Legislative Audit Bureau ■



**Report 20-15  
September 2020**

# **Wisconsin Retirement System Reporting for Participating Employers**

Calendar Year 2019

## **Joint Legislative Audit Committee Members**

### Senate Members:

Robert Cowles, Co-chairperson  
Chris Kapenga  
Alberta Darling  
Janet Bewley  
Tim Carpenter

### Assembly Members:

Samantha Kerkman, Co-chairperson  
John Macco  
John Nygren  
Melissa Sargent  
Katrina Shankland

**State Auditor**  
Joe Chrisman

**Financial Audit  
Director**  
Erin Scharlau

**Team Leader**  
Stephanie Yost

**Auditors**  
Bridget Cull  
Lauren Pawlowski  
Phillip Stapel

**Publications Designer  
and Editor**  
Susan Skowronski

## **LEGISLATIVE AUDIT BUREAU**

---

The Legislative Audit Bureau supports the Legislature in its oversight of Wisconsin government and its promotion of efficient and effective state operations by providing nonpartisan, independent, accurate, and timely audits and evaluations of public finances and the management of public programs. Bureau reports typically contain reviews of financial transactions, analyses of agency performance or public policy issues, conclusions regarding the causes of problems found, and recommendations for improvement.

Reports are submitted to the Joint Legislative Audit Committee and made available to other committees of the Legislature and to the public. The Audit Committee may arrange public hearings on the issues identified in a report and may introduce legislation in response to the audit recommendations. However, the findings, conclusions, and recommendations in the report are those of the Legislative Audit Bureau.

---

The Bureau accepts confidential tips about fraud, waste, and mismanagement in any Wisconsin state agency or program through its hotline at 1-877-FRAUD-17.

For more information, visit [www.legis.wisconsin.gov/lab](http://www.legis.wisconsin.gov/lab).



## **CONTENTS**

---

<b>Letter of Transmittal</b>	<b>1</b>
------------------------------	----------

---

<b>Auditor's Report</b>	<b>3</b>
-------------------------	----------

---

## **OPINIONS PUBLISHED SEPARATELY**

---

The schedules and our opinions on them are available on the Department of Employee Trust Funds' website.





# STATE OF WISCONSIN | Legislative Audit Bureau

22 East Mifflin St., Suite 500 ■ Madison, WI 53703 ■ (608) 266-2818 ■ Hotline: 1-877-FRAUD-17 ■ [www.legis.wisconsin.gov/lab](http://www.legis.wisconsin.gov/lab)

Joe Chrisman  
State Auditor

September 30, 2020

Senator Robert Cowles and  
Representative Samantha Kerkman, Co-chairpersons  
Joint Legislative Audit Committee  
State Capitol  
Madison, Wisconsin 53702

Dear Senator Cowles and Representative Kerkman:

As requested by the Department of Employee Trust Funds (ETF), we have completed an audit of the Schedule of Employer Allocations of the Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS), the Schedule of Collective Pension Amounts of the WRS, and the related notes to these schedules as of and for the year ended December 31, 2019. These schedules, and our unmodified opinions on them, may be found on ETF's website.

We also audited the financial statements and related notes of the WRS as of and for the year ended December 31, 2019, and provided our unmodified opinion on them, as detailed in report 20-14, which we also published today. The WRS fiduciary net position, which represents resources available to pay pension benefits, increased from \$96.7 billion as of December 31, 2018, to \$112.1 billion as of December 31, 2019, or by 15.9 percent. This increase is primarily attributable to an increase in investment income from a loss of \$4.1 billion in 2018 to a gain of \$19.0 billion in 2019.

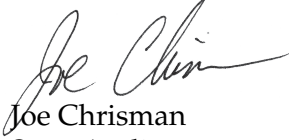
Accounting standards for pension plans, issued by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board, require the calculation of a net pension liability or net pension asset, which is represented by the difference between the fiduciary net position reported in the financial statements and the total pension liability calculated by the actuary. ETF calculated a net pension asset for the WRS of \$3.2 billion, as of December 31, 2019. This is a \$6.8 billion change from the \$3.6 billion net pension liability calculated as of December 31, 2018.

Each of the 1,516 participating employers in the WRS is required to report its proportionate share of this net pension asset on its financial statements if prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. As of December 31, 2019, the proportionate share of the net pension asset for all State of Wisconsin agencies was \$896.0 million, or 27.8 percent of the total net pension asset. Of this amount, \$430.5 million related to the University of Wisconsin System. The net pension asset for the state agencies will be reported in the State's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) for the year ended June 30, 2020. Additional information related to the accounting standards for pensions is included in report 20-14.

The Independent Auditor's Report on Internal Control over Financial Reporting and on Compliance and Other Matters, which is required by *Government Auditing Standards*, begins

on page 5. We did not identify any control or compliance concerns that were required to be reported under these standards.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe Chrisman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Joe Chrisman  
State Auditor

JC/ES/ss



---

## **Auditor's Report ■**

---





Report 20-15

## Independent Auditor's Report on Internal Control over Financial Reporting and on Compliance and Other Matters

Senator Robert Cowles and  
Representative Samantha Kerkman, Co-Chairpersons  
Joint Legislative Audit Committee

Members of the Employee Trust Funds Board and  
Mr. Robert J. Conlin, Secretary  
Department of Employee Trust Funds

We have audited the Schedule of Employer Allocations of the Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS) as of and for the year ended December 31, 2019, and the related notes. We have also audited the totals for the columns titled Net Pension Liability (Asset), Total Deferred Outflows of Resources Excluding Employer Specific Amounts, Total Deferred Inflows of Resources Excluding Employer Specific Amounts, and Plan Pension Expense included in the Schedule of Collective Pension Amounts of the WRS as of and for the year ended December 31, 2019, and the related notes. We have issued our report dated September 28, 2020, on these schedules. We conducted our audit in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America and the standards applicable to financial audits contained in *Government Auditing Standards*, which is issued by the Comptroller General of the United States.

### Internal Control over Financial Reporting

Management of the Department of Employee Trust Funds (ETF) is responsible for establishing and maintaining effective internal control over financial reporting (internal control). In planning and performing our audit of the WRS schedules, we considered ETF's internal control to determine the audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances for the purpose of expressing our opinions on the schedules, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of ETF's internal control. Accordingly, we do not express an opinion on the effectiveness of ETF's internal control.

*A deficiency in internal control* exists when the design or operation of a control does not allow management or employees, in the normal course of performing their assigned functions, to prevent misstatements, or to detect and correct misstatements on a timely basis. A *material weakness* is a deficiency or a combination of deficiencies in internal control such that there is a reasonable possibility that a material misstatement of the schedules will not be prevented, or that a material misstatement will not be detected and corrected on a timely basis. A *significant deficiency* is a deficiency or a combination of deficiencies in internal control that is less severe than a material weakness, yet important enough to merit attention by those charged with governance.

Our consideration of internal control was for the limited purpose described in the first paragraph of this section and was not designed to identify all deficiencies in internal control that might be material weaknesses or significant deficiencies. Given these limitations, during our audit we did not identify any deficiencies in internal control that we consider to be material weaknesses. However, material weaknesses may exist that have not been identified.

### **Compliance and Other Matters**


As part of obtaining reasonable assurance about whether the WRS schedules are free from material misstatement, we performed tests of compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, and contracts, noncompliance with which could have a direct and material effect on the determination of schedule amounts. However, providing an opinion on compliance with those provisions was not an objective of our audit and, accordingly, we do not express such an opinion. The results of our tests disclosed no instances of noncompliance or other matters that are required to be reported under *Government Auditing Standards*.

We have also audited the financial statements and related notes of the WRS as of and for the year ended December 31, 2019, in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America and the standards applicable to financial audits contained in *Government Auditing Standards*. We expressed an unmodified opinion, dated September 28, 2020, on those financial statements. In addition, we issued the Independent Auditor's Report on Internal Control over Financial Reporting and on Compliance and Other Matters dated September 28, 2020, and included in report 20-14, related to the audit of the financial statements, and reported a significant deficiency in internal control over financial reporting.

### **Purpose of This Report**

This report is an integral part of an audit performed in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* and should be used when considering ETF's internal control and compliance. The purpose of this report is solely to describe the scope of our testing of internal control and compliance and the result of that testing, and not to provide an opinion on the effectiveness of ETF's internal control or on compliance. Accordingly, this report is not suitable for any other purpose.

LEGISLATIVE AUDIT BUREAU

  
Joe Chrisman  
State Auditor

September 28, 2020