**GOP attorney’s rate almost double Evers’ in lame-duck suits**

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Republican lawmakers have agreed to pay the former solicitor general $500 per hour to represent them in two suits challenging the lame-duck laws, nearly double the rate Gov. Tony Evers is paying his private attorneys in those cases.

The GOP contracts, provided to WisPolitics.com through an open records request, also don’t cap the overall cost for Misha Tseytlin, who served under GOP Attorney General Brad Schimel, in the cases.

Meanwhile, taxpayers are on the hook for up to $100,000 to cover the cost of Madison law firm Pines Bach to represent Evers in the two suits. Each contract calls for a rate of $275 per hour for the attorneys representing the new governor. There’s also a cap of $50,000, though the ceiling could be amended under each document “if litigation requires additional resources.”

Evers spokeswoman Melissa Baldauff slammed the disparity in rates.

“Republicans won’t pay for a middle-class tax cut but they’re willing to spend unlimited money defending their attempts to override the will of the people,” she said Feb. 8.

Both Evers and GOP lawmakers hired private attorneys for representation in two recent lawsuits challenging the December extraordinary session: one from a coalition of groups that say the lame-duck laws are unconstitutional because they stemmed from an unlawful legislative session; and the latest from five unions and state Sen. Janet Bewley that argues the laws violate the state Constitution’s separation of powers clause.

Tseytlin in the GOP contracts notes the $500 hourly rate he’s charging “is less than my standard hourly rate.” The document shows Tseytlin will be Republicans’ primary attorney in the case, but he may assign other attorneys work on aspects of the case, though the contract says none would make more than $500 hourly. Tseytlin has joined Chicago-based firm Troutman Sanders, according to the documents.

In a separate letter, sent to Vos and Senate President Roger Roth on Jan. 16, Tseytlin wrote if the Legislature prevails in the case brought by the League of Women Voters and other groups, he would seek to recover the full fees the Legislature would have incurred “had I charged the fees typically charged to commercial clients.” The Legislature would then remit to Tseytlin the full amount of any fees awarded, the letter said.

That language was not included in either of the two contracts.

The state is also on the hook for out-of-pocket expenses, such as printing, photocopying, travel costs and more, per the contracts. Tseytlin’s firm will send the Legislature monthly invoices to cover the costs incurred, the documents said.

The latest contract between Evers and Pines Bach was provided to WisPolitics.com by the governor’s office. That contract, in response to the suit brought by the unions, comes after Evers hired the firm to represent him in the earlier lame-duck case brought by the League of Women Voters and other groups.

Baldauff, the Evers spokeswoman, said the office’s decision to retain Pines Bach comes from the “overlapping issues” in both cases that would make it “more cost effective” to hire the same firm for each suit. She also pointed to the firm’s “expertise in state constitutional law issues.”

Evers has also assigned private attorneys to represent the Elections Commission in the League of Women Voters suit, at a cost of up to $50,000. The commission had requested representation from the Department of Justice, but the agency notified the commission it couldn’t provide representation due to a conflict. The terms of its contract are similar to the ones signed by the governor’s office.

Former Deputy Attorney General Dan Bach, who served under Dem Attorney General Peg Lautenschlager, and two colleagues at Lawton & Cates will represent the commission. The terms of the contract, which call for the firm to make up to $50,000, are similar to one the governor’s office signed.

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