



How Much Are Massachusetts Congressional Staffers Making? Maybe More Than You Think

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Working as a top staffer for the Bay State's members in Congress can fetch a salary well in excess of \$100,000 — with some earning nearly as much as the official salary for a U.S. representative or U.S. senator.

The two highest-paid staffers work for Massachusetts's two senators. Elizabeth Warren's chief of staff, Daniel Geldon, and Ed Markey's state director, Mark Gallagher, each earn \$169,458 a year. That's almost as much as their bosses make, which is \$174,000. It's also double the median income in Massachusetts, which was \$72,266 in 2016, according to the U.S. Census. Warren, who is known for her criticisms of private sector CEO pay, has six staffers at the six-figure level. Markey has eight.

"It's sad but unsurprising to see that out-of-control government salaries exist at the state as well as the federal level," said Paul Craney, spokesman for Massachusetts Fiscal Alliance. "Politicians run on the platform of being the same as their constituents. It is this type of development that makes taxpayers distrust the political system and all those who are part of it. These salaries show the dichotomy between what politicians say and what they do."

And it's not just those at the very top of the staffing period. In all, 27 staffers for Massachusetts members of Congress, including some at mid-level, hit six figures. On Markey's staff, Anna Unruh Cohen makes \$157,058 as the Director of Energy, Climate, and Natural Resources. Likewise, in Warren's office, Emily Ross, who serves as both a senior adviser and scheduler, earns \$104,999.

On the House side, most of the nine U.S. representatives from Massachusetts had one or two staffers at the top of the scale. U.S. Representative Joseph Kennedy (D-Brookline) had three while Representative William Keating had none. Kennedy also had the highest-paid staffer among the reps: Gregory Mecher, his chief of staff, who had a reported salary of \$40,400 for the second quarter of this year alone, amounting to potentially \$161,600 for the year.

Six-figure salaries are hardly unheard of among Capitol Hill staffers. A [Politico report](#) in 2010 found that 2,000 hit that mark. At the time, Politico reported that staff salaries were capped at \$172,500.

Though the salaries might seem high, they are actually well below what Capitol Hill employees could get in the private sector, according to Jock Friedly, chief executive officer of [LegiStorm](#), a company that tracks Congressional data.

And those salaries paid out today by the federal government are actually less than what they once were, Friedly noted. “People are definitely not being paid as much as they used to be paid as staffers,” Friedly said.

One libertarian policy expert said the salaries themselves are not necessarily problematic, describing them as “not unreasonable” given the high cost of living in the Washington D.C. area.

“However, it’s the gold-plated benefits that federal workers receive that should be scaled back. As an example, federal workers receive both defined-benefit and defined-contribution plans, yet the former type of plan has been mainly phased out in the private sector,” said Chris Edwards, a tax policy expert and editor of www.DownsizingGovernment.org at the Cato Institute.

The defined-benefit plan offers congressional staff members a federal pension for life if they qualify through enough years of service.

A second problem, he added, is the number of employees on Capitol Hill. “It is also true that congressional staff is greatly bloated — 33,000 people work for Congress — reflecting today’s vast overreach in the size and power of the federal government,” Edwards said.

New Boston Post pulled its figures for staff salaries from two public reports on expenditures produced by Congress. (Click [here](#) to see the Senate version and [here](#) for the House.) The figures for the Senate are released in six-month increments; the House publishes comparable data for every quarter. Those figures were used to estimate annual incomes for Congressional staffers.

The data is publicly available but there was a time when Capitol Hill staff salaries were something of a secret. That ended when a company that tracks Congressional data, [LegiStorm](#), started publishing [salaries](#) in a more accessible form on its Web site about a decade ago, provoking [an uproar](#) from some Congressional aides.

“The fact is, until we published salaries online, nobody had publicly released government salaries on the scale that we did it. It was a shock to many people to find their salary so easily found by their family, friends, and co-workers. One Harvard lawyer who met me said, only half-joking, that we had ‘destroyed’ his sex life because his dates could see how poorly he was compensated for such a well-educated person,” Friedly said.

Nonetheless, Friedly said such information serves a valid purpose and is important for the public to see.

“The incredibly broad discretion that members of Congress have in hiring and compensating staffers is all the more reason why the public needs to know who gets paid what,” Friedly said. “While most members of Congress are careful with their budgets, in the past, numerous abuses have occurred where taxpayer payments have gone to felons, mistresses, and to serve the personal, campaign, or private business interests of members of Congress, not the public interest. Without knowing the level of public compensation, it would be difficult for reporters and other watchdogs to find these abuses.”

New Boston Post reached out to the offices of Senators Warren and Markey for comment, but they did not respond. Neither did the offices of several U.S. representatives that were contacted, including the one with the most six-figured staffers, Joseph Kennedy.

Here's the breakdown:

Rep. or Senator	Staffer Name	Position	Quarterly Salary	Salary Annual	
HOUSE					
Elizabeth Warren	Daniel H. Geldon	Chief Of Staff	84,729.48	\$169,458.96	\$119,643.00
Ed Markey	Mark C. Gallagher	State Director	84,729.48	\$169,458.96	\$119,643.00
Joseph Kennedy III	Gregory M. Mecher	Chief Of Staff	40,400.01	\$161,600.04	\$105,000.00
Elizabeth Warren	Roger W. Lau	State Director	78,607.16	\$157,214.32	\$141,000.00
Ed Markey	Ana L. Unruh Cohen	Director Of Energy, Climate, And Natural Resources	78,529.32	\$157,058.64	\$151,500.00
Elizabeth Warren	Jonathan M. Donenberg	Legislative Director / Chief Counsel	77,249.93	\$154,499.86	\$121,100.04
Stephen Lynch	Robert K. Ryan	Chief Of Staff	38,375.01	\$153,500.04	\$161,600.04
Joseph Kennedy III	Nick M. Clemons	District Director	37,875.00	\$151,500.00	\$153,500.04
Richard Neal	William A. Tranghese	Chief Of Staff	37,500.00	\$150,000.00	\$120,000.00
Katherine Clark	Brooke A. Scannell	Chief Of Staff	35,250.00	\$141,000.00	\$105,000.00
Ed Markey	Andrew W. Cohen	Senior Counsel	66,450.00	\$132,900.00	\$122,700.00
Ed Markey	Joseph A. Wender	Senior Policy Advisor	63,436.96	\$126,873.92	\$150,000.00
Ed Markey	Phillip J. McGovern	Senior Policy Advisor	61,950.00	\$123,900.00	\$120,360.00
Seth Moulton	Jeremy Joseph	Chief Of Staff	30,675.00	\$122,700.00	\$104,999.90
Joseph Kennedy III	Sarah E. Curtis	Deputy Chief Of Staff	30,275.01	\$121,100.04	\$157,214.32
Niki Tsongas	Katherine Enos	Chief Of Staff	30,090.00	\$120,360.00	\$169,458.96
James "Jim" McGovern	Jennifer H. Waiters	Chief Of Staff	30,000.00	\$120,000.00	\$154,499.86
Elizabeth Warren	Bruno F. Freitas	Deputy Chief Of Staff	60,000.00	\$120,000.00	\$111,499.92
Michael Capuano	Jonathan A. Lenicheck	District Director	29,910.75	\$119,643.00	\$120,000.00
Michael Capuano	Robert E. Primus	Chief Of Staff	29,910.75	\$119,643.00	\$817,672.96
Ed Markey	Giselle L. Barry	Communications Director	59,415.93	\$118,831.86	\$118,831.86
Ed Markey	Leslie M. Gray, IV	Senior Policy Advisor	59,233.38	\$118,466.76	\$117,486.66
Ed Markey	Avenel D. E. Joseph	Senior Policy Advisor For Health	58,743.33	\$117,486.66	\$126,873.92
Elizabeth Warren	Jess M. Torres	Deputy State Director	55,749.96	\$111,499.92	\$169,458.96
Katherine Clark	Christian W. Price	District Director	26,250.00	\$105,000.00	\$118,466.76
Seth Moulton	Richard A. Jakious	District Director	26,250.00	\$105,000.00	\$157,058.64
Elizabeth Warren	Emily G. Ross	Senior Advisor And Scheduling Director	52,499.95	\$104,999.90	\$123,900.00
William Keating	NONE at \$100K				\$132,900.00