



1848 PROJECT

W I S C O N S I N

THE
FORWARD
AGENDA

WELCOME LETTER FROM 1848 PROJECT PRESIDENT, REBECCA KLEEFISCH

Wisconsin conservatives have ushered in bold policy reforms in the last decade: Act 10. Right to work. Welfare reform. Billions in tax relief for small businesses, farmers, and families.

But a state whose motto is “forward” demands that we continue to press ahead with the next generation of bold, innovative ideas. We cannot be content to rest on our laurels or the pride of past accomplishments. Our state still lives with the legacy of the big government progressives of a century ago. And our world continues to change with new challenges and opportunities arising every day.

I founded the 1848 Project to listen, learn, and lead. Over the past year I have executed on that three-part mission. We have listened to the voices, stories, and hopes of thousands of average, everyday Wisconsinites. Through nearly 50 roundtables and 22 working group sessions, through public engagement at scores of events, and through quantitative research, we have asked the people of Wisconsin what is important to them as they look to their futures. What are their hopes, goals, aspirations, and dreams for themselves, their businesses, their communities, and their state? We have learned by consulting experts, scholars, and the experiences of other states.

And now we are ready to lead with a new agenda that reflects the will of Wisconsinites, that offers policy solutions to our state’s biggest problems, and that unites conservatives behind a single common purpose.

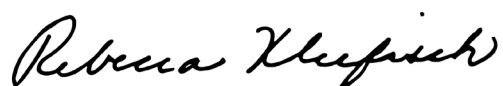
These ideas spring from the common sense and good heartedness of the people of Wisconsin. They align with our deeply rooted principles as conservatives, drawn from our core convictions about how free people live together in a free society. This white paper from the 1848 Project charts the course for conservatives in Wisconsin in the decade ahead. These ideas are concrete, they are thought out, they are bold, and they are winning. If our state is to win the future, I believe this is the path forward for doing so.

I hope people find this agenda interesting and accessible; we have written and presented it in a way that aims to reflect back where it came from—the voices of every day Wisconsinites spread across every corner of our beloved Badger state.

Don’t just read them, talk about them with your friends, family, neighbors. Hold your own focus groups. Do what we did: listen and learn. And if you agree with us that this is the path forward for our state—then lead. Lead your community in support of this agenda, so we can see Wisconsin lead the nation.

One way to lead is by engaging with people online. Follow us on Facebook and Twitter, give us your reactions to our ideas, and check back on our website as we provide more details and supporting arguments for this agenda.

Thank you for reading and leading with us.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca Kleefisch". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

One of my favorite paintings in the Wisconsin Capitol Building is a ceiling panel that admonishes public officials, “The will of the people is the law of the land.” When they spend every day in Madison, listening to the lobbyists and bureaucrats, politicians forget quickly about the taxpayers. I have always believed that policy should be made by having ideas from across Wisconsin be brought to the capitol by the people’s representatives, rather than having Madison make policy that’s then imposed on the people.

That’s why, when I was Lieutenant Governor, listening to the people of Wisconsin was always a top priority for me. Whether in our statewide tax reform roundtables, or our “Real Jobs with Rebecca” visits, or our annual small business summits, my goal was always to connect people to policy, rather than thinking I had all the answers.

When we started the 1848 Project, we insisted that a sustained period of listening precede any policy development. We needed to listen to Wisconsin before we could make any claim to lead.

So that’s what we did: we brought people together to listen to one another. Sometimes we did it over zoom, and sometimes each of us had a table to ourselves, but we pushed through the problems associated with the pandemic because we thought it was that important. Ultimately we held nearly 50 listening sessions in six months, almost two a week through the life of the Project thus far. We also held 22 working group meetings with people on the frontlines of these issues.

And even when we weren’t intentionally convening conversations, they happened anyway - on construction sites and factory floors or an American Legion hall, before and after a hundred events, speaking engagements, and on call-in radio shows. It even happens when I go to the grocery store near my home—whether in or out of public office, I’m actually really happy that people always feel like they can share an idea, a concern, or a story.

This report is the embodiment of all those conversations. After listening that much, we had a lot of ideas. We then put them through a rigorous analysis. Did they reflect a concern we heard in multiple listening sessions? Did the policy solution align with our conservative principles? Does empirical evidence or experience elsewhere show it will be effective? Is it the sort of problem where the state government is the best actor to implement a solution? Would the policy enjoy broad support across the Badgerland? Does it belong in a policy agenda that would unify and inspire Wisconsin’s next generation of conservative leaders?

My topline takeaway from all my listening and travels is this: Wisconsinites deserve better than what they’re getting from their Governor right now. Whatever the issue—public safety, economic growth, constitutional rights and liberties—people look at Madison and see a massive failure to listen or lead. Isolated in Madison, cut off from reality, slow to act and afraid to take charge, the Governor has failed at a time when we could least afford it. Almost regardless of the issue, the answer starts with a change at the top.

But it doesn’t end there. A new governor is the start, it opens the door, but then it will take conservatives of all stripes, on all levels, in every community, to make a new agenda a reality. The work starts now.



CHECKLIST FOR OUR FUTURE

PROTECTING PUBLIC SAFETY

- ✓ Hire 1000 new cops across the state
- ✓ Surge State Patrol in high-crime areas
- ✓ Tougher penalties on mobs and riots
- ✓ Fund body cameras for every officer
- ✓ Appoint tough-on-crime, rule-of-law judges
- ✓ Ban sanctuary cities
- ✓ Support school resource officers
- ✓ Expand mental health nursing training
- ✓ Support regionalized mental health centers of excellence
- ✓ Train police on dealing with mental health encounters
- ✓ Increase crisis intervention credentialing for officers

INVESTING IN WORKERS AND GROWING OUR PROSPERITY

- ✓ Increase technical and trades training in every high school
- ✓ Double the number of youth apprenticeships
- ✓ Define success based on jobs taken, not classes completed
- ✓ Reform and reduce occupational licensing barriers
- ✓ Focus tax credits on hiring and training workers
- ✓ Expand rural broadband
- ✓ Invest in local road maintenance

IMPROVING PUBLIC EDUCATION

- ✓ Guarantee parent and taxpayer access to curriculum
- ✓ Increase access and transparency to school budgets
- ✓ Raise standards, starting with civics education
- ✓ Ban critical race theory from the classroom
- ✓ Teach life skills before high school graduation
- ✓ Start from the basic principle that dollars follow the child, not buildings or bureaucrats
- ✓ Move substitute teacher selection from Madison to local districts
- ✓ Protect the integrity of youth athletics
- ✓ Create one uniform program for school choice
- ✓ Expand the circle of charter school authorizers
- ✓ Start education savings accounts for special-needs students



BETTERING OUR HEALTHCARE

- ✓ Encourage direct access from patients to care
- ✓ Make Wisconsin the leader in price transparency
- ✓ Outlaw surprise medical billing
- ✓ Ban disqualification for insurance based on preexisting conditions
- ✓ Allow anyone to buy any health plan regardless of zip code
- ✓ Facilitate greater use of telemedicine through deregulation

REFORMING BIG GOVERNMENT

- ✓ Require two rules repealed for every new rule adopted
- ✓ Limit expansive executive powers in a crisis
- ✓ Move state agencies out of Madison and across Wisconsin
- ✓ Incentivize state employees based on outcomes
- ✓ Create an anti-appropriations committee
- ✓ End the personal property tax
- ✓ Lower and flatten income tax rates
- ✓ End gender-specific sales taxes

PROTECTING THE BALLOT BOX

- ✓ Set uniform rules for casting and counting votes
- ✓ Shift responsibility for election rules from WEC to the Legislature
- ✓ Ban ballot harvesting
- ✓ Ban outside groups buying influence or access on election administration

DEFENDING OUR CONSTITUTION & WISCONSIN VALUES

- ✓ Vigorously enforce antitrust laws against monopolistic Big Tech
- ✓ Create a right to sue for victims of viewpoint discrimination by Big Tech
- ✓ Protect student free speech rights at UW and in high schools
- ✓ Stop the possibility of church closures in a pandemic
- ✓ Ensure robust protection for conscience in a pandemic
- ✓ Bar commandeering of state and local police to enforce federal gun laws
- ✓ Enact the Born-Alive Infant Protection Act
- ✓ Appoint originalist judges in the mold of Justices Thomas and Barrett
- ✓ Invest in nursing home workforce





**THE
FORWARD
AGENDA**

PROTECTING THE PUBLIC: PRIORITIZING THE SAFETY OF OUR PEOPLE AND OUR COMMUNITIES

BACK THE BLUE

With homicides at record highs in our state's biggest cities, now is not the time to cut police department budgets. In fact, in some of our communities we should be increasing police resources to stem the summer wave of violence currently wrecking neighborhoods. The thin blue line is being stretched to the breaking point, which can have disastrous consequences.

We're already seeing what happens when cops don't have the support they need in Madison and Milwaukee, where violent crime rates are soaring. Local officials in those communities need to step up and invest in their police, but we can't stand idly by when citizens of Wisconsin are unsafe in their homes. The Governor should immediately deploy trained resources like the Wisconsin State Patrol to our neighborhoods hardest hit by crime. At times like these, we need a highly visible policing surge in certain areas to take back our streets, and a strong set of reinforcements from the State Patrol could make a major difference until recruitment investments yield enough new officers.

A short-term surge needs to be matched with the long-term solution we all know we need: more cops on the beat. Some municipalities, dominated by liberals on their city councils, have gut their local police forces precisely at the time when we need more cops, not fewer. We don't want the State to come in and replace local funding for police while liberals shift funding into big-government social programs. But with tight controls on how state funds are used, we can provide the protections citizens need with 1000 new sworn officers statewide.

We also need to make clear that our communities will not tolerate mob rule. No one should think Madison could ever become the next Portland. We should stiffen the penalties for rioting and unlawful assembly.

We also need to make sure localities are not undermining the rule of law by declaring themselves so-called sanctuary cities for illegal immigrants. Wisconsin believes in the rule of law, and local police should not facilitate a catch-and-release policy for people breaking any law.

SUPPORTING GOOD COPS

After the isolated actions of a few bad cops, the Left has now overreached in condemning the many good men and women who put their lives on the line every day to keep us safe. We need to support and celebrate our top cops to provide role models for our kids and communities.

That can start with body cameras on every officer. We already have cameras on virtually every cop car, and many



departments have body camera policies already in place. There are challenges we have to work through with body cameras, no doubt, but the fundamental reality remains that when we entrust the state's power of life and death to a human being, we can rightly expect accountability and transparency for how that power is used. But we also have to remember that cops are human beings that we thrust into highly charged, dangerous situations, and we ask them to make split second decisions to protect their own lives and the lives of civilians.

We also need judges who appreciate the hard work of law enforcement. Many of the judges appointed or elevated by Governor Evers were part of the "catch and release" problem on the Milwaukee and Dane County benches. When officers work hard to root out crime, we need judges who make criminals do the time. Finally, we need to support some of our most important officers—those serving in our schools. On the one hand, we don't want to turn everyday school discipline issues into criminal concerns that can ruin a kid's start in life. But we fundamentally don't believe that's what school resource officers do. We believe they create a positive presence for police among youth, fight drug addiction among youth, and help head off and reduce youth crime through early intervention. We should have more SROs, not fewer, because teachers need to teach, not perform law enforcement duties.

ADDRESSING THE INTERSECTION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT AND MENTAL HEALTH

Police are rightly labeled first responders; their job is to arrive first and secure, stabilize, and assess the situation. That is an incredibly important — and dangerous — role. But we talk too little about second responders — the child welfare worker who comes to a domestic violence call; the foster parents who take in a traumatized child; the ER nurse asking a sexual assault victim to complete a rape kit; a healthcare worker dealing with a mentally unstable homeless man. Those are not easy jobs either. And just as liberals are crazy to say we can replace all the cops with social workers, conservatives are making a mistake if we ignore the call from cops to fully fund these support systems they need to succeed.

We need more mental health resources, and more people in various health and safety systems trained in mental health awareness. We also need more mental health professionals across the credential spectrum; not every mental health response requires a board-certified psychiatrist or psychologist. That's why I'm a big fan of the UW School of Nursing, which offers certificates for nurses in mental health, and even a doctorate of nursing practice specialty in mental health. If we can get more nurses trained in mental health, we can grow our overall mental health workforce far faster than a decades-long solution with scholarships for psychiatrists.

An expanded mental health workforce will make possible a regional approach for mental health hospitals. We pursued regionalized centers of excellence ("hubs and spokes") in treating opioid addiction, and a similar strategy can help with mental health, and ease the burden of law enforcement trying to cope with transporting people in mental health crisis.

Finally, we need to ensure professionals across the service spectrum are trained to be mental health aware. Many of our first responders simply don't know basic tools and strategies for effective crisis intervention because no one has ever taught them. All first responders should have basic mental-health training, and we should move toward sufficient training and credentialing for first responders to determine the need for emergency detention.



ECONOMIC GROWTH: STRENGTHENING WISCONSIN'S ECONOMY THROUGH WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, JOB CREATION, AND INVESTMENT IN INFRASTRUCTURE.

WORKFORCE

If there is one message I hear and see over and over, it's that available jobs exceed the number of workers who can take them. Employers tell me a lot of that starts with our unemployment and welfare systems, which no longer push people toward work. Under the Walker-Kleefisch administration, we achieved record low unemployment rates and high workforce participation rates by designing systems that encouraged work over welfare. The Evers administration has taken a very different approach, and it shows.

For the foreseeable future, we need a strategy that focuses foremost on investing in workers, not necessarily in tax breaks to bring in employers. When we can't fill the jobs we have, we need a shift in strategy that invests in people.

To my mind, that starts with making increased technical, trade, and vocational training available in every school district. We should create more of a seamless pipeline from K-12 to tech college, with recognized, transferable credentials that are the vocational equivalent of advanced placement or IB credits. And we should double the number of state-funded youth apprenticeships for high school juniors and seniors who want to enter straight into the workforce.

We also need to reinstate many of the reforms that we instituted to move people from welfare to work. Across a variety of state agencies, we've seen the old mindset taking over, watering down work requirements. For liberals, they judge the success of a program based on how many people they're "helping" by getting them onto welfare. As conservatives, we know that real help is getting people off of welfare and into work. And we should incentivize state, county, and contractor case-workers to perform well by acting less like bureaucrats and more like life coaches, helping clients solve problems and find sustainable work.

We also need to lower the barriers to entry for talent attraction to draw people to Wisconsin and keep them here after they finish their schooling. We're making progress creating attractive communities, especially for young professionals. But one easy barrier to lower would be reforming occupational licensing. We should eliminate any license that isn't actually necessary for protecting health and safety, reduce entry requirements for professions that should be credentialed but don't need so many hours of training to qualify, and increase reciprocity with other states as much as possible. By reducing regulation we can reduce prices for consumers and reduce waiting for workers.

JOB CREATION

Our job creation strategy should put people first. That means when we use tax credits as a tool, they should be leveraged to get Wisconsin employers to hire and train previously unemployed workers.

We also need to make sure we keep our focus on the real engines of the economy: our small businesses and entrepreneurs. When I left the news business, it was to start a small, one-woman marketing company. We need to support the side hustles, the Etsy earners, the downtown shops and Main Street moms looking to make it. While huge business deals that create thousands of jobs are exciting to land, small businesses make up 97.7% of all the employers in Wisconsin and should be our focus.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

State government needs to ensure economic prosperity reaches every corner of the state, and that means investing in our rural areas and not only our big cities. Especially in a post-pandemic age when more and more can be done online and from anywhere, the prospects for rural living and long-term tourism have never been better.

One obvious tool for rural tourism is ongoing investment in broadband. Another is investing in local roads. The state has put a lot of money the last few years into mega projects in the southeast - it's time for the rest of the state to see investment, and town roads are an essential tool for farmers.



EDUCATION REFORM: IMPROVING WISCONSIN'S PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM

- ✓ **MORE ACCOUNTABILITY**
- ✓ **INCREASED TRANSPARENCY**
- ✓ **HIGHER STANDARDS**



After a year of hovering over our kids' shoulders, helping at home with online schooling through the pandemic, parents have finally seen and heard up close exactly what their schools are teaching. And they are deeply concerned.

And now they're engaged. But some schools are resistant to transparency and accountability. Parents should not be charged thousands of dollars in public records fees to know what their schools are teaching their kids, or worse, refused information entirely. We need to pass a law guaranteeing parents and taxpayers have total access to the curriculum used in their schools. And taxpayers should have access to school spending.

And that curriculum needs to get better, with higher standards across all subjects. That can start in civics, where Wisconsin received an F grade compared to other states. We passed a law requiring high school seniors to take the test for new American citizens, but too many schools have yet to actually change their curriculum to prepare their students to pass the citizenship exam.

And that civics curriculum should teach students about more than just how a bill becomes a law—it should inspire them with a love of our nation and an appreciation for our constitutional rights and liberties. We should not let woke university schools of education smuggle left-wing ideology into our classrooms under the guise of critical race theory or culturally responsive teaching or social emotional learning. We should not be asking students—or teachers—to endure classes or workshops that ask them to identify their personal background or beliefs or label them as oppressors or privileged based on race or class. We can teach all of our nation's history, and we can help all of our students tackle tough issues, without dividing and labeling people in ways that discourage rather than facilitate honest conversations.

Additionally, while we demand higher standards for education and acknowledge that high poverty and high minority tract districts have been most denied in-person education and have the biggest achievement gaps, we must insist that education dollars fund education. Our system is fundamentally flawed when it funds systems instead of students. Taxpayer money should follow each child, rather than be assigned to buildings or bureaucrats, to give power to parents and hold administrators accountable for results. All kids deserve an equal shot at the American dream, starting with a solid basic education, but that's not what our current system is delivering for many. Especially with an influx of new state and federal education dollars, we must remain vigilant to ensure dollars go into the classroom. It is an absolute shame when teachers spend their personal dollars on school supplies for their neediest students, while at the same time millions of new dollars wash into district bank accounts. Actual instruction must be the priority for school spending.

One problem facing many districts is a substantial shortage of substitute teachers, a problem made more acute by COVID-19 quarantines. Bureaucrats in Madison should not be allowed to keep a stranglehold on substitutes with multi-month application and approval processes and multiple fees. Districts know their communities best, and know who would make a good substitute teacher. Any adult with a bachelor's or associate degree who passes a comprehensive background check should be able to help out in a classroom once approved by their local district.



Finally, curriculum cannot lose sight of the larger goal of education—not only preparing students for college and career, but for life. That means teaching hard skills and facts, like reading and writing, but also soft skills, like interviewing for a job, public speaking, and managing personal finances and commitments. Employers tell me all the time that they can teach how to run a machine, but it’s much harder if the employee doesn’t show up on time day after day. We need statewide standards for soft skills that focus on the same college and career readiness we see for hard skills.



In the extracurricular context, we need to protect fair rules for competition. Though you’d have thought it went without saying, it now needs saying in law—biological boys should not compete in girl’s sports.

SCHOOL CHOICE

Many kids’ families prefer a non-traditional school for their child. Wisconsin needs to expand the circle of charter authorizers to break the bottleneck that currently forces charters to depend on institutions pressured by anti-reform forces. We also need to continue creating more choices for parents, including supporting the best nonpublic schools in Milwaukee to expand their life-changing impact to more students. We should have a goal that no student is stuck on a waitlist or dependent on the luck of a lottery for a decent education. And we should have one uniform set of rules and requirements to qualify for educational choice regardless of zip code.

We also must recognize the unique circumstances of families raising children with special needs. The special needs scholarship begun by state government a few years ago was a good first step, but we need to grant these families maximum flexibility to pay for not only school but tutors, therapies, curriculum, and other special education supports. Educational Savings Accounts (ESAs) are the best tool to give the greatest flexibility to families dealing with unique situations.

**“WE NEED TO CONTINUE
CREATING MORE CHOICES
FOR PARENTS”**

-REBECCA KLEEFISCH



HEALTHCARE: INCREASING ACCESS AND LOWERING COST

As a cancer survivor, I've spent the better part of the past decade regularly aware of the ups and downs of health-care. I was blessed—I had fantastic care from the best doctors affiliated with Froedert and the Medical College. We had good insurance through my husband Joel's job and an incredible support system of family and friends.

But that level of care is out of reach for many across Wisconsin, whether because of cost or coverage or geography. We need to tackle all three of these aspects of our health system.

We can start bringing down costs by encouraging direct care that empowers patients to also be consumers. Whether through personal doctors, nurse-practitioner clinics, or independent health centers for the low-income, we should want direct care to flourish so people don't need to rely on middlemen. This is especially important for people with HSAs and FSAs. And though integrated health systems are adding value and bringing down costs in some ways, they should not engage in anticompetitive behavior by denying hospital admitting privileges to independent practitioners.

In general, we should set as a goal making Wisconsin the national leader for price transparency in health care. Some procedures, whether kids' orthodontics or an MRI scan, are relatively transparent, whereas other procedures are utterly inscrutable. And price transparency should never come after a procedure as a surprise bill.

We can also bring down costs by incentivizing treatment at the right credential level, and stopping up-billing for complex medical codes that are not in plain language for patients. We are lucky to live in an age with incredible specialization for medicine, such that we can get world-class experts specific to our unique diagnosis. But many of our daily ailments don't require a specialist, or even necessarily a doctor. Urgent care, clinics inside neighborhood pharmacies, nurses and nurse practitioners, all can increase convenience while decreasing cost.

For coverage, we should bar health insurance companies in Wisconsin from denying coverage to people like me with pre-existing conditions. And any Wisconsinite should be able to buy any health plan they like regardless of zip code.

Finally, to help continue improving rural medicine, we need stronger rural centers of excellence. Telemedicine is a huge part of the solution, as we all learned during the pandemic when we couldn't just show up at urgent care like before. With video calls and common sense, medical professionals can treat a lot, and do so without the expense of an exam or emergency room.



REFORMING GOVERNMENT: MAKING GOVERNMENT WORK FOR THE PEOPLE BY CUTTING WASTE AND INCREASING EFFICIENCY

Earlier I referenced a favorite line of mine, “the will of the people is the law of the land.” But on too many topics, it’s the will of the Madison bureaucrats that reigns supreme. That has to change.

Change starts by reducing the power wielded by bureaucrats through administrative rules and so-called guidance. We need a rule like the federal government had under President Trump - for every new rule on the books, two old rules need to come off. We also need to clarify the emergency powers of the governor and the Department of Health Services—we need a strong executive to respond in a crisis, but we cannot and will not abide an unelected official exercising complete control over our society without any legislative check.

We will get better rules if we get better bureaucrats, which we believe starts with moving state agencies out of Madison to be closer to the people they serve. We took a good first step with the DNR forestry division’s move, but it’s time to get serious about moving agencies like the Department of Agriculture Trade and Consumer Protection, Department of Children and Families, and the Department of Workforce Development closer to the populations they serve.

We also need to engage our state employees better. State employment has turned into political ping-pong ball. There has got to be a better way, where state employees are proud of their work, appreciated for their accomplishments, and accountable for their decisions. One way to start is to bring state employees into the savings process, incentivizing teams to achieve lean results. Another way is to incentivize case workers to move people off of benefits and into jobs.

Through smart management of public agencies and wise stewardship of taxpayer dollars, we can continue to reduce the burden of state government on Wisconsin families. One simple start would be for the legislature to create an “anti-appropriations committee” whose job is to look for ways to save money and cut appropriations just like we have other committees who are constantly being lobbied to spend more money.

As we continue to see economic growth combined with fiscal belt tightening, we can achieve our long-term goals of ending the personal property tax and gliding toward lower, flatter income tax rates. It is a shame to our state that even given all we have accomplished, Illinois has a single flat tax rate at 4.95%, whereas Wisconsinites get penalized for making more money, and most families pay at the 5.3% rate. Economic competitiveness, talent attraction, and small business growth all begin with lower, flatter tax rates.

One particular obnoxious tax should also end: the “pink tax” on feminine products. We don’t tax necessities like food and medical supplies, and we should not have a sales tax on other hygiene necessities. The first state in the nation to pass the 19th Amendment guaranteeing equality in voting should not be the last state in the nation to extend basic tax fairness to all necessary purchases.

**“THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE IS THE LAW OF THE LAND.
BUT ON TOO MANY TOPICS, IT’S THE WILL OF THE MADISON
BUREAUCRATS THAT REIGNS SUPREME. THAT HAS TO CHANGE.”**
-REBECCA KLEEFISCH



ELECTION REFORM: DEMANDING INTEGRITY AND RESTORING TRUST IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS.

When we enacted voter ID, Governor Walker had a great line: we wanted to make it easy to vote and hard to cheat. Unfortunately, some municipalities have eroded protections at the ballot box and made it easier to cheat rather than harder. Even if these were good policies, and they are not, it is also fundamentally unfair to have one set of rules in Madison or Milwaukee and another set in Waukesha or Wausau.

Wisconsin needs uniform rules for voting—uniform rules for early voting hours and locations and forms, uniform rules for returning absentee ballots, uniform rules for opening and counting ballots, and uniform standards for voting in long-term care facilities. And those uniform statewide rules should be made by the constitutionally responsible body—the Legislature—not guidance found in footnotes in staff memoranda from the Wisconsin Election Commission. Anything less is unfair to every legal voter and may well violate the constitutional promise of equal protection.

We also need to increase our ballot security to ensure the hard-to-cheat part of our policy. This should seem obvious, but Left-leaning activists are finding new ways to bend the rules. No outside groups should handle ballots, enjoy special access, or occupy a privileged position on Election Day. No outside group should be able to buy its way behind closed doors on the pretense of offering “expertise.” No absentee ballot should be handled or harvested by a union steward, a block captain, or a community organizer. No improper ballot should be “cured” by anyone besides the voter himself. And no door should ever be closed to legally-appointed election observers, who must have complete access and full viewing at every step in the process.

Our ballots should be cast in secret. They should be collected and counted in the fullest light of day.



**“OUR BALLOTS SHOULD BE CAST IN SECRET.
THEY SHOULD BE COLLECTED AND COUNTED
IN THE FULLEST LIGHT OF DAY.”**

-REBECCA KLEEFISCH



PROTECTING FREE SPEECH AND FIGHTING CANCEL CULTURE

For too long, social media companies have abused a federal legal provision named Section 230 as a “get out of jail free card” for blatant discrimination against conservative viewpoints. In coordination with the Biden Administration, they are selectively targeting anyone who dares to question elite consensus on a host of topics, to the point of even censoring U.S. Senator Ron Johnson.

That kind of viewpoint discrimination by monopoly media is unacceptable. Wisconsin’s Attorney General should vigorously investigate any violation of antitrust laws by big tech. And citizens should be able to sue when big tech companies selectively break their contracts on a viewpoint basis.

Just as big tech needs to show more respect for free speech, schools and universities need to protect their vital role as facilitators of the marketplace of ideas. Students should not be regulated by “bias reporting systems” or “bullying” policies that treat mainstream political and religious speech the same as racial and religious slurs. Speakers should not be canceled because someone complains, and student groups should not be forced to foot the bill for campus police because others choose to be unruly.

PROTECTING CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES

The genius of America is its written constitution, which permanently cabins the powers of government and guarantees individual rights to every citizen. That’s fundamentally different from other nations, even advanced countries like Great Britain that nevertheless entrust government to a single legislative body bound by unwritten traditions and international treaties.

These days our individual rights could use more respect. The pandemic reminded us our first liberty, the free exercise of religion, hangs by a delicate thread. The Wisconsin Constitution promises, “The right of every person to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of conscience shall never be infringed.” We seem to have forgotten that principle for a while. Government should never again declare certain businesses essential or life-sustaining while denying the soul-sustaining work of in-person religious gatherings.

Just two lines later, the Wisconsin Constitution also charges the state to ensure no “control of, or interference with, the rights of conscience.” At a time when some public and private employers are issuing mandates on employees to undergo certain medical procedures, state law should ensure robust protection for the rights of conscience and religious objectors. We should never allow government to infringe on the rights of an individual’s medical freedom.

Our Second Amendment rights are also under attack from a new administration in Washington captive to the anti-gun agenda. Wisconsin state and local law enforcement should never be commandeered by federal law to enforce restrictions on our rights.

Finally, good laws rely on judges who believe in the rule of law. The Wisconsin Supreme Court of the last several years has shown the stark difference between judges who serve as the bulwark of our constitutional order and activists who will bend the rules to achieve their aims. At every level of the judicial system, we need judges who are vigilant in the protection of our rights and faithful in the application of legal texts. We need judges who look to jurists like Clarence Thomas, Antonin Scalia, and Amy Barrett as role models.



PROTECTING THE SANCTITY OF LIFE

I have had the honor of serving as master of ceremonies at the Wisconsin Right to Life dinner. It is truly inspiring to look out on a cavernous ballroom of tables and see over a thousand people generously committed to the cause of life. I see that same passion as compassion in crisis pregnancy centers, new mom supply centers, and hospice ministries.

When Wisconsin's legislature passed a law to protect born-alive infants who survive an abortion, Tony Evers vetoed it. That was an incredibly callous mistake. We need to enact this vital right to life.

The pandemic has also reminded us of the vulnerability of our parents and grandparents in life's final stages. Government must show respect for our elderly, which means combating nursing home abuse, investing in our nursing workforce, cost-sharing for relatives who live with family, and a promise that never again will a pandemic leave family members cut off from their parents' passing away.

CONCLUSION

When I started the 1848 Project, I christened it after the state's founding year for a reason. I believe the best way forward for our state is to reclaim those pioneering values that characterized our state's first inhabitants: hard work, strong families, tight-knit communities, and a willingness to move to opportunity.

Those first Badgers were amazing people. They came to a land of forests and rolling hills shaped by glaciers and turned it into a land of farms, quarries, and cities. They made peace with the native peoples, explored ten thousand lakes and streams, and built a state out of a wilderness. They were not afraid of the future.

They held a healthy fear of both big government and big corporations. They were fighters for the little guy against the special interests, the railroads and robber barons who were buying off legislators and bureaucrats. We may have traded railroads for Amazon and Facebook, but the story sounds awfully familiar.

We could use a return to those founding principles. Today's politics is characterized far too much by fear-mongering. And today's policy is too much big government being friendly to big corporations that don't put the American people first. It's time to fix that.

It starts with new ideas and new leadership. *We have listened. We have learned. Now, let's lead.*

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT US:

-  1848PROJECT.ORG
-  INFO@1848PROJECT.ORG
-  FACEBOOK.COM/1848PROJECT
-  TWITTER.COM/1848PROJECT

