

WISCONSIN · BLUE BOOK ·

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Front cover: On August 22, 2018, Wisconsin veterans honored the families of their fallen comrades during the dedication of a Gold Star Memorial on capitol grounds. Gold stars first came to represent fallen service members during World War I, when American families made and displayed “service flags,” upon which blue stars signified family members serving, and gold stars signified those who died. Today, the Gold Star Memorial pays tribute to the Wisconsinites who sacrificed their lives—and the families who sacrificed their loved ones—in service of the nation. JOE KOSHOLLEK, LEGISLATIVE PHOTOGRAPHER

Back cover: This poster honored Company G of the First Wisconsin Infantry Regiment, mustered into service in July 1917 at Camp Douglas, Wisconsin, and redesignated as the 127th Infantry within the 32nd Division. During World War I, Company G fought in several battles in France, and were later commended for “fighting like demons” at the Battle of Chateau-Thierry under the command of General John Pershing. Surviving members of this company arrived home to Madison on May 17, 1919. Together, they and their fallen comrades were among the 118,000 Wisconsinites who served during World War I. WHS IMAGE ID 130839



Tony Evers
Office of the Governor

July 2019

Dear Readers:

As a kid who grew up in Plymouth, met my wife in kindergarten, took her to junior prom, and went from working in a cheese factory to teaching science to becoming state superintendent, I was incredibly humbled to be sworn in as the forty-sixth governor of the great state of Wisconsin this year.

The *Wisconsin Blue Book* allows us to reflect on our history, how far we have come, and the work we have yet to do. At a time of great division and increasing polarity, it has never been more important to create and maintain a more aware and engaged citizenry, foster accountability and transparency, and promote a greater understanding of all the things that we have in common. It is essential that we return to governing and leading with kindness and respect, empathy and compassion, and integrity and civility, and that we embrace discourse and dialogue that make us better people and better citizens. These are not Republican or Democratic values—these are our Wisconsin values that have made our state great.

The *Blue Book* is an important reminder that we are more than the sum of our differences and that what unites us is far, far greater than what divides us. So, whether you are a farmer, a small business owner, a teacher inspiring kids to be thoughtful and engaged citizens, someone who is considering a career in public service, or a constituent who wants to learn more about your elected officials, or you are interested in Wisconsin's rich history and traditions, the *Blue Book* serves as a helpful resource to learn about, respect, and appreciate, not just our state, but each other, so we can keep moving Wisconsin forward, together.

Thank you for picking up a copy. Happy reading and On, Wisconsin!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Evers".

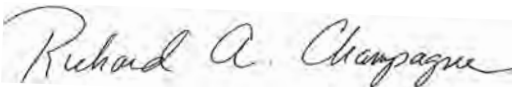
Tony Evers
Governor

INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 1919, the Wisconsin Legislature enacted laws to provide for temporary support for World War I veterans with disabilities, cash bonuses for service, and bonuses for veterans to pursue education. Wisconsin led the nation 100 years ago with these new programs, many of which were precursors for later federal legislation, such as the GI Bill. At the time, passage of these veterans programs was far from guaranteed: it was an uphill battle for advocates to convince legislators of the distinct challenges veterans faced and there were political divisions in the legislature, intense conflict between the legislature and the governor, and legal challenges in the courts. The realization of these programs required coalition building in the legislature, mobilization and involvement of the public, and development of novel constitutional arguments.

In the 2019–20 *Wisconsin Blue Book* feature article, “A Hero’s Welcome,” LRB analyst Jillian Slight tells the story of “a watershed moment in Wisconsin history,” when the 1919 Wisconsin Legislature overcame discord to enact innovative veterans legislation following World War I. “A Hero’s Welcome” is a story about political statesmanship and an energetic legislature; it is also about the sacrifices of the Wisconsin veterans who served their country in combat only to return home to face political divisions over how their military service should be recognized and rewarded.

The 2019–20 *Blue Book* also contains the biographies of all legislators, descriptions of executive and judicial branch agencies, and vital statistics on Wisconsin. The *Blue Book* is an introduction to Wisconsin state and local government and the most comprehensive source for information about the State of Wisconsin. Composing the *Blue Book* requires agency-wide collaboration, involving all LRB staff to write essays, update tables, and assemble and organize material about the legislature and state and local government. The LRB’s legal and research expertise is unmatched, and three people deserve special recognition: Kira Langoussis Mochal, Nancy Warnecke, and Lauren Jackson. Their leadership has been invaluable, and I am grateful for their contributions.



Richard A. Champagne, Chief
Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau

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