

# WISCONSIN ▪ BLUE BOOK ▪

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**Front cover:** Views of the Wisconsin State Capitol and its verdant 13.5-acre grounds in downtown Madison are stunning from any angle. Here, the capitol’s granite dome and crowning statue, Wisconsin—a symbol of the state’s motto, “Forward”—peek through the trees on a sunny fall day. GREG ANDERSON, LEGISLATIVE PHOTOGRAPHER

**Back cover:** The first state capitol built in Madison, portrayed in this 1853 engraving, was not only the seat of state government, but a busy public forum used as a dance hall, theater, and even, occasionally, a funeral parlor. After two governors were sworn into office in 1856, with each claiming to have won the 1855 gubernatorial election, citizens came to the capitol in droves to see how this drama—the subject of this book’s feature article (see page 290)—would play out. WHS IMAGE ID 7042



**Tony Evers**  
**Office of the Governor**

July 2021

Dear Readers:

This past year, our state, our country, and our world were ravaged by a pandemic that took the lives of thousands of our friends, neighbors, and loved ones. Nearly everything about our daily lives had to adapt to these circumstances, and we have been challenged in more ways than we ever could have imagined. It has been a year rife with worry, loss, and tragedy, and it challenged the depth of our empathy and the strength of our selflessness.

But it was also an extraordinary show of resilience, kindness, and community. We saw this in the retired healthcare professionals who returned to the workforce when we needed them most; in the school staff and community members who delivered meals to our kids learning at home; in the volunteers who provided comfort and company to isolated older adults. I have been overwhelmed—but frankly, not surprised—by the heart, grit, and determination of the people of this great state.

As I write this, the vaccine is being distributed across our state and country. But this pandemic underscored deficiencies and disparities in our state and our economy. Now, we are faced with a decision: we can go back to the way things were, or we can demand the future we dream. We must work in earnest to fix the problems this year brought to the forefront and to bounce back from this pandemic better than before. After all we've been through, we won't apologize for wanting more for each other and our state.

Each *Blue Book*—but especially this one—presents an opportunity for us to reflect; reminds us that we are more than the sum of our differences; and serves as a helpful resource to learn about, respect, and appreciate, not just our state, but each other.

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

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Wisconsin faced its first major political crisis in 1856. On a bitterly cold day in early January, not one but two men were sworn in as governor: William Barstow, the Democratic incumbent, and Coles Bashford, his challenger and the first gubernatorial candidate of the newly formed Republican party. As days stretched into weeks, Wisconsinites nervously waited to see whether the standoff would end in civil strife. To their relief, the Wisconsin Supreme Court intervened with a ruling in *Bashford v. Barstow* that averted violence and charted a clear course forward.

The 2021–22 *Wisconsin Blue Book* feature article, “Dueling Governors: How the Wisconsin Supreme Court Resolved the State’s First Political Crisis,” revisits a moment when state institutions stood on shaky ground. Fierce partisan debate over slavery and immigration—coupled with unabashed corruption—threatened to upend what little stability existed in the new state. Against this backdrop, the court’s decision in *Bashford v. Barstow* represented the triumph of the state’s constitution over chaos. The court simultaneously settled the dispute over the rightful governor and asserted its authority to do so under the constitution. And thanks to its decisive action, Wisconsin not only weathered its first major political crisis but emerged stronger, with a clear separation of powers that has anchored state government ever since.

The 2021–22 *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: Nancy Warnecke, Louisa Kamps, and Kira Langoussis Mochal. Their leadership has been invaluable, and I am grateful for their contributions.



Richard A. Champagne, Chief  
Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau

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