

# WISCONSIN ▪ BLUE BOOK ▪

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2023 ▪ 2024



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**Front cover:** Sunlight illuminates “Wisconsin” on an otherwise cloudy summer day. For over a century, this statue, sculpted by Daniel Chester French, has graced the capitol dome. Standing over 15 feet tall and weighing over three tons, she holds an outstretched arm towards Lake Monona. Her massive size prompted both excitement and anxiety among those who assembled at the capitol square to watch her ascension atop the dome on July 20, 1914. The Wisconsin State Journal reported that thousands of spectators emitted “an audible sigh of relief” when the operation was carried out successfully.

JAY SALVO, LEGISLATIVE PHOTOGRAPHER

**Back cover:** During the 1899 legislative session, reporters covering the Wisconsin State Assembly sit at two semicircular desks situated between the assembly chief clerk and a row of freshman representatives. They shared this tight space with a handful of boys who served as assembly pages. Apart from these desks, reporters had no home base in the capitol building until 1947 Senate Joint Resolution 20 dedicated a small room in the south wing for use as a pressroom. Since then, the pressroom has become essential to the work of the capitol press corps, and 1997 Wisconsin Act 237 guaranteed reporters’ use of the pressroom under statute. See the feature article beginning on p. 278 for a profile of the people and stories that have animated the pressroom over the past 50 years. WHS IMAGE ID 23448



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

July 2023

Dear Readers:

In 2023, we will celebrate Wisconsin's 175th birthday, and never in 175 years of statehood has our state been in a better fiscal position than it is today. We've made critical, strategic investments to recover from the worst pandemic in a century and the worst economic crisis in a decade, and our state's economy shows it.

Our unemployment recently hit record lows; we have had the highest number of people employed ever; and our general and "rainy day" funds ended the last fiscal year at the highest levels ever. Today, Wisconsin has a historic surplus, and with it, historic opportunity and historic responsibility: we have roads and bridges to fix; schools to fund; kids to support; communities to keep safe; water to keep clean; and a future we've built together after years of neglect that, today, we must work to protect. Preparing our state for the twenty-first century and building the future we want for our kids is only possible if we're willing to do the work together.

The Wisconsin Blue Book always reflects upon a moment of our state's history, and the 2023–24 *Wisconsin Blue Book* is no exception. This is a breakthrough biennium that will determine the trajectory of our state for generations. We face much work ahead of us, but there is also much opportunity. We can achieve big things in our next four years together. And if we are inspired, not by power, but by partnership; if we are dedicated, not to selfish interests, but to self-sacrifice; if we can forge new paths, not through conflict, but through collaboration, then together we will.

Happy reading, and On, Wisconsin!

Sincerely,

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

Tony Evers  
Governor

## INTRODUCTION

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In an oft-quoted letter to the Marquis de Lafayette in 1823, Thomas Jefferson wrote that “the only security of all is in a free press.” Since early statehood, Wisconsin has been fortunate in having a capitol press corps committed to this principle. Those who have served in the capitol press corps in the last 175 years have provided thorough, timely, and objective reporting on the state legislature and all of state government. Wisconsinites know of the actions of their state elected officials through capitol reporters and, with that knowledge, may become more informed citizens.

The 2023–24 *Wisconsin Blue Book* feature article, “On the Capitol Beat,” focuses on the men and women who report the news, illuminating the unique challenges and rewards that their work entails. The article draws from interviews with current and past members of the capitol press corps that the Legislative Reference Bureau began conducting in January 2022. This undertaking is part of a larger LRB oral history project to preserve the recollections of legislators and other key actors in state government. Members of the capitol press corps are among these key actors. From these interviews, Managing Legislative Analyst Jillian Slaughter has compiled a narrative account of the people, stories, and outlets that keep Wisconsinites informed.

The 2023–24 *Blue Book* also contains the biographies of statewide elected officials, descriptions of legislative, executive, and judicial branch agencies and responsibilities, 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 two people deserve special recognition: Nancy Warnecke and Kira Langoussis Mochal. Their leadership has been invaluable. In addition, I am especially grateful for the contributions of Stefanie Rose, Jessie Gibbons, Jillian Slaughter, and Madeline Kasper.



Richard A. Champagne, Director and General Counsel  
Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau

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