
# "I Can Do That Too": Lieutenant Governor Margaret Farrow Reflects on Her Career

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WISCONSIN HISTORY PROJECT • April 2020, Volume 2, Number 1

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## Introduction

On July 18, 2014, the Legislative Reference Bureau interviewed former Wisconsin State Representative, State Senator, and Lieutenant Governor Margaret Farrow for the LRB's oral history project. This project collects and preserves legislators' stories and insights—especially those not recorded elsewhere—as they prepare to leave the Legislature or after they have left office.

Margaret Farrow was the first woman to hold the office of lieutenant governor in Wisconsin, as well as one of the first women elected to the state Senate. Farrow was born in Kenosha, Wisconsin, on November 28, 1934. She attended Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine High School in Racine and Rosary College in Illinois before graduating from Marquette University with a bachelor's degree in political science and education. Farrow worked as a school teacher and real estate agent prior to starting her political career. She served first as a trustee of the Elm Grove Village board from 1976 to 1981, then as president of the village of Elm Grove from 1981 to 1987. In 1986, Farrow was elected to the Assembly, representing a district covering most of Waukesha County and portions of western Milwaukee County. In a 1989 special election, she was elected to the Senate, a seat she held through 1999. On May 9, 2001, Farrow was sworn in as lieutenant governor, becoming the first woman to hold that position in Wisconsin. She served in this role until her retirement from public office in 2002. Farrow has since served on numerous committees and boards, including, from 2013 to 2017, the University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents.

## Path into politics

Farrow said that many of her political views were instilled by her parents and their strong work ethic. Both her "very Irish" mother and "very German" father were born to immigrant parents and ended "their formal education at eighth grade by necessity." Her mother went on to learn stenography and become a corporate executive assistant. Her father started as a bookkeeper at Snap-on Tools and worked his way up to become a financial executive at the company. Farrow noted that her father shaped her views on business and economic development, especially her opposition to regulations that she thought were unjustified and unduly hampered private companies' profitability:

> He taught me—and kept driving [into] my head—that if there isn't money being made, there's no way government will have anything to spend to help people. It's the private sector that's the engine of the economy. And you have to justify spending in the private sector, [so] you should [have to justify spending] in the public sector. . . . My sense is the better and more successful we can make the private sector, the more that will give government the ability to have funds to do what we feel really should be done on behalf of the citizens.

In her words, Farrow learned about business and politics "at my dad's knee." She also became excited about studying government in grade school. She recalled sitting in her sixth-grade civics class at St. Mary's School in Kenosha: "That turned me on to government. Somehow the flame went on—it still isn't out—and I was fascinated." During high school, she took as many history courses as she could, and later, studying political science in college, she enjoyed learning how public policy is made. Farrow said that after college she had hoped to go to law school and perhaps eventually specialize in constitutional law. But she became a "full-time mom" when she and her husband, John, an engineer, began having children.

## Local government

In 1967, Farrow and her family settled in Elm Grove, where she became concerned about a local traffic issue. Cars were ripping around a tree-shrouded corner that was dangerously close to an area where the neighborhood children played. Farrow began attending village board meetings to see if anything could be done to improve sight lines at the corner. In the process, her passion for government reignited:

> I went down and [checked]: could something be done just to, at least, trim those trees and give a little more visibility? . . . I sat in a few meetings, listening to what was going on, and realized, "Wait a minute. That's what I'm interested in!"

Farrow described the Elm Grove Village Board in those days as a "good old boys club" that were "all men and always had been men." Watching the board's elected trustees conduct business, Farrow said she realized "I can do that too." Eventually, she decided to run for a seat on the board: "I didn't have any axe to grind. I just wanted to have a piece of the development of public policy." In 1970, Farrow ran for village trustee against an incumbent and came close to beating her opponent. Undeterred, she ran again for a seat on the village board in April 1972, two months after she had given birth to her fifth son. This time she lost by a wider margin of approximately 150 votes. Although no one has ever confirmed her suspicion, Farrow said she still believes she lost her second race because a group of nuns in her district, whom she had taken care to visit at their convent during both campaigns, disapproved of her running for office while she "had this little baby at home." Apparently, she added, the drop in votes occurred in the ward where the convent was located. "I swear [the nuns] thought I should stay home with the baby. They didn't know John could change diapers as well as I could!"

A few months later, Farrow was appointed to the Elm Grove Board of Appeals to help the village address zoning requests. After serving a three-year term on the appeals board, she was appointed to the village plan commission in 1975. The following year, she ran against six people for three open seats on the village board. She finished second in

the race, comfortably winning a seat as the board's first female member. "I won my spurs finally," she said.

Farrow described one of the most heated issues she worked on during her time on the Elm Grove Village board—a matter that alerted her to the perspectives of Native American tribe members across the state and to the gender dynamics of the board itself. In 1979, a developer discovered human bones on land in Elm Grove that he was grading in preparation for building a new subdivision. The discovery prompted ardent debate over whether the bones, part of a grave site later dated to 1000 B.C.E., should be turned over to archaeologists for further study or returned immediately to Wisconsin Native American tribes for reburial.

The village held a public hearing attended by members of several Native American tribes who came dressed in traditional headdresses and, as Farrow put it, "a tribal show of colors that was overwhelming." Prior to the hearing, she and her colleagues had decided together that it was important to study the bones for "the benefit of everyone in this area, to understand [our history]." At the hearing, she made a motion to turn the bones over to an archaeologist for six weeks. Her colleagues had designated her to make the motion on behalf of the board, she maintained, because they knew it would not be well received: "They said, 'Oh, Peg! You can do that.' Oh, yeah, sure guys! Why aren't any of *you* willing to do it?" And indeed, tribal members who came to the hearing and others following the story from afar were "very unhappy" with the board's decision:

> AIM, the American Indian Movement, threatened to surround the village. And we were told by the Justice Department, "We're not going to come and protect you." So we ended up having to have a judge make the decision, and the bones were given back to the tribal people. . . . It was a very uncomfortable feeling. But it gave me great respect for the singular voices of each tribe. It is very hard to get a consensus of our 11 tribes in this state. I learned it firsthand, because they each [very much have] their own tribal thinking and their own tribal tradition. I learned an awful lot through it, which I've carried the rest of my life.

Another challenge Farrow faced working in local government, especially after she became Elm Grove's president, was navigating the so-called Sewer Wars. In the mid-1980s, Elm Grove, along with seven other communities outside Milwaukee County with sewer lines connecting to the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage System, fell into a prolonged dispute with Milwaukee County over how much the outlying communities would pay for $3 billion in federally required sewer repairs. Farrow founded and chaired a coalition of the eight suburban communities, known as the Fair Liquidation of Waste Committee, or FLOW. The coalition argued that the outlying communities, being primarily residential, should contribute less to the repairs than communities within Milwaukee County, where larger sewage-producing industries were more likely to be located. The outlying communities, including Elm Grove, were being asked to pay a "boatload of the money and were not being treated fairly," Farrow said.

The sewer dispute was not resolved until 1996,[1] but in the meantime, it helped set the stage for Farrow's move into state government. While she was leading FLOW, Farrow often traveled to Madison to lobby legislators on the group's behalf. Becoming a regular visitor at the capitol allowed her to observe the Legislature in action and learn how state-level politics operate:

> You know, they'll tell a serious candidate for office, "Go sit in on some of the meetings of the body you want to join so you understand." I came in [to the Legislature] knowing exactly what went on around the year. I had a great education.

## Running for state office

By 1986, Farrow was feeling "a little frustrated" with her district's representation in Madison. She decided to run for her district assembly seat against John Young, the Republican incumbent:

> [Young] had been a Brookfield alderman, so he understood local government. But he just didn't get the message. We needed someone to make a little more noise in a very comfortable Republican district. So I ran.

Describing her campaign strategy, Farrow said that, along with distributing countless pencils, she focused primarily on "listening to constituents, making sure that I knew what our communities needed, and [making myself] available, which I had always been in local government." She added:

> I had a lot of coffees. I think coffees are the best way to meet people—I still do. Up to and through state Senate, I think coffees in people's back yards or front living rooms are almost better than ringing doorbells, because people really get a chance to question you. . . . They're coming knowing they're going to meet you, instead of you taking them by surprise at their door. I swear, people are polite at doors, and then, probably, after you leave, about a half hour later, they'd say, "Gee, if I knew I was going to talk to that candidate, I would have asked"—thus and such. I like to use my time productively, so that's why I like that.

At first, some Republican party leaders seemed reluctant to recognize her candidacy. Farrow recalled attending a Republican political gathering, held at a hotel in Madison in the spring 1986, at which all the new party candidates running for office that year were lined up and introduced to the crowd, except her:

> You know how they have the parade of candidates out here in June, or whenever it is? So I [was down here] as a small local government person watching this parade of candidates

1. In 1996, Elm Grove and other Fair Liquidation of Waste communities that had withheld payment for Milwaukee County sewer repairs agreed to pay the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District $140.7 million in a lawsuit settlement. See Editorial, "'Sewer Wars'—R. I. P.," *Milwaukee Business Journal*, October 27, 1996, https://www.bizjournals.com/milwaukee/.

the year before, and the year before that. I knew it was going on. So I came to it, and I'm over at the Concourse, and I'm standing there watching all the Republican candidates be introduced—as a Republican candidate who would not be introduced! And so Governor Thompson, then Representative Thompson, comes up alongside of me and says, "Why aren't you up there?" I said, "Because they won't acknowledge that I'm running." And he said, "That isn't right!" He was very close friends with John Young. I said, "Oh, come on! Don't pull one on me. I know the way this works." So anyway, that was a funny side of it. [But] on election night I beat John.

Asked if she had expected to win, Farrow replied:

Yes. I wouldn't go into a race if I didn't think [I could win]. I wouldn't say I walked through it being sure. But if I hadn't thought I had a chance, and I didn't want to do something and have a reason for running, I wouldn't have run. It was close. . . . [Young] had always beaten [opponents from Brookfield] with Elm Grove helping him. . . . Well, he wasn't going to count on Elm Grove this time, because I did get a marvelous support [there], and a number of votes in Brookfield. [But] it was a very close election. In fact, I had to wait a bit to see if he was going to ask for a recount, [but] he didn't.

## First sessions in the Assembly

While Farrow's service as a representative was comparatively brief—she spent only one full term in the Assembly before her election to the Senate—she admitted that it was difficult to find her footing in the Assembly:

I'm not quite sure how to characterize what goes on in the Assembly, but I was not good [there] because I couldn't get up on and harangue. I'm not a . . . bomb thrower. There are some very articulate members who over the years have given wonderful floor speeches. David Prosser, for example, as Speaker—some of his best stuff that people remember was when he flipped the switch and went ballistic [about] the opposition side of whatever issue was going on. . . .It's a bigger hall [than the Senate]. Even though they're all amplified, you just feel as though, to get everyone's attention, you [have to shout]. I got up and announced that my mother [died]—nobody even heard me. You know how you get up and you adjourn in honor of the wonderful this or that? Nobody even heard me. No one ever said to me, "I'm sorry your mother died." They didn't hear me because I was too studied [and too polite] in the way I said it.

Nevertheless, having already met and forged relationships with legislators through her work lobbying for FLOW was an asset to Farrow. Her new colleagues in the Legislature welcomed her expertise and nicknamed her the "Sewer Queen," because "if anybody had a question about sewers, I knew those statutes!"

Farrow was reelected to the Assembly in 1988 and sworn in to her second term in

early January 1989. Later the same month, she traveled to Washington, D.C., to attend President George H. W. Bush's inauguration. She was one of a group of guests invited to the weekend event by Governor Thompson, who had by then become one of her closest friends and staunchest supporters. Throughout the weekend, she heard a rumor that President Bush was planning to appoint Wisconsin Senator Susan Engeleiter to head the Small Business Administration. Farrow said she knew "immediately" that she wanted to make a bid for Engeleiter's soon-to-be-vacated seat representing the Thirty-third Senate District and "let it be known that I was going to run." When a special election was held later that year to fill the Thirty-third District seat, Farrow's main opponent in the primary race was Representative Peggy Rosenzweig, who represented the district directly east of Farrow's in the Assembly. Describing the election, which pitted her against a like-minded colleague, Farrow said simply, "We fought hard, and I won decisively."

## Serving in the Senate

Right away, Farrow felt a stronger affinity for the Senate than the Assembly. She described it as more of a deliberative, debating body than the Assembly and attributed this difference to the larger size of senate districts, which typically contain a broader range of people and political viewpoints:

> [In the Senate, you have] fewer people to deal with—fewer colleagues—[but] more complexities to the positions [senators] have to take because of the mix of their districts. You can have a half-and-half [Democratic and Republican] district when you have three assembly districts together . . . [but you can get] a senate district that's two-thirds one party, one-third the other, or half-and-half.

Compared to the brisker pace of the Assembly, the process of considering and amending bills in the Senate could be painstakingly slow at times. But, Farrow explained, "that's the way our bicameral legislative process should be":

> Things shouldn't fly through [the Senate]. Things shouldn't be easy. Things should be very carefully examined and worked over. There should be a good time to listen to the people that we're acting on behalf of. So I guess I loved it.

In the Senate, Farrow was a committed advocate for school voucher programs, right-to-work bills, and legislation restricting access to abortion. She also served three sessions as a senate member of the Joint Committee on Finance. She loved diving into details of policy and budgeting, but acknowledged that serving on the committee created "a heavy, heavy workload," especially during budget season, when joint finance members would have to review and vote on policy pertaining to dozens of items contained in each budget bill. Often, Farrow said, she was not satisfied with the range of policy options provided by

the Legislative Fiscal Bureau and would want to create her own amendments to budgets and other bills:

> You know how the working papers go—they come out the night before you're [working on] an agenda. When we finally had [cell] phones, so I could talk to them on my hour's drive in [to Madison, I would call and tell my aide], "I want my own amendment." . . . [I didn't like] the various alternatives that the Fiscal Bureau gave me; I had another idea. I resented being hemmed in. That was my first reaction: you'd get "here's the issue as they define it," and then here's alternative one, alternative two, alternative three. I generally would want to [draft my own amendment] on some issues.

Farrow described the 1995 Miller Park stadium debate as one of the most contentious issues she worked on during her time in the Senate. Proponents of a plan to build a new baseball stadium for the Milwaukee Brewers argued that having a bigger and more modern stadium would elevate Wisconsin's stature. The plan entailed the creation of a 0.1 percent sales tax increase in Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Racine, Washington, and Waukesha counties to fund construction. Critics argued, just as passionately, that it was improper to require taxpayers to support a privately owned baseball team. Farrow recalled sitting in her car outside a coffee shop in Elm Grove when "two more-than-middle-aged women" spotted her and came over to register their opposition to the stadium tax plan:

> I was waiting to meet someone. It was the middle of the afternoon. . . . All of a sudden, someone's hammering on my window. . . . I roll my window down. "You're Senator Farrow?" "Yes. I'm Senator Farrow." "We want you to know that if you vote for that stadium, we'll never vote for you again!" [They] just laced me up one side and down the other. I listened politely and said, "Well, I'm going to see what [the plan looks like when it comes] before us and what it consists of. I appreciate hearing from you."

As Farrow explained, whether she voted for or against the plan, she would alienate constituents who had immovable opinions on the issue:

> Now, I could have sat there and had two more people walk up to me, do the same thing, and say, "If you *don't* vote for that stadium, I will never vote for you again." I couldn't have convinced either side . . . because they didn't want to hear it. They were blind to it. It was emotional, and it was a gut issue. Now, the same is true of abortion. You either believe that it's wrong, or you believe that it's right. You believe one way or the other, and you're not going to move people.

Farrow ultimately decided to support the plan. But whether or not the so-called Brewer Stadium bill[2] would have enough votes to pass was unclear at midday on October

2. 1995 Wisconsin Special Session Assembly Bill 1.

5, 1995, when a legendarily long day of floor debate began—and lasted until 5 a.m. the following day. The Senate rejected the bill twice on 16–15 votes before reconsidering. Prior to the final vote, Farrow, who was the senate assistant majority leader at the time, heard a rumor circulating that a senator named "George" was going to swing over to vote in favor of the bill. She and others tracking votes, including Majority Leader Mike Ellis, assumed that meant Senator Gary George, of Milwaukee, was going to switch his "no" vote to a "yes." However, as Farrow recalled, the final vote unfolded with a different "George" pivoting to vote in favor of the plan:

> It was at least 2:30 [a.m.], but I'm a night person, so I never had a problem with late nights. So . . . the roll call started, and . . . as you know, in the Senate, you have to sit in your seat, you have to be recorded in your seat, and you stay in your seat. . . . We get to Gary George, and he votes no! So the rest is history: it passed with [Racine Senator] George Petak changing his vote.

Farrow said that Petak had been playing with the idea that he was going to switch his vote, yet had also told the people of Racine that he would not vote for a tax on Racine. Petak later said that he switched his vote because he believed the Brewers would leave Milwaukee if the team didn't get a new stadium. But he paid a price for casting the decisive vote for the Miller Park plan: Racine citizens who opposed the stadium tax saw Petak's vote as a betrayal and launched a campaign to recall him from office. Farrow noted that "no one thought of a recall [at the time], because it hadn't been done." The recall, held in June 1996, was successful, and Petak became the first Wisconsin legislator removed from office.

A decade later, people who objected to subsidizing stadium construction were further rankled when the team was sold at a considerable profit. The family of Bud Selig, the Brewers' former owner, made $223 million when they sold the team, considerably more than Selig and his partners invested in the Brewers during the years they owned the team. Reflecting on the controversial tax that created Miller Park,[3] Farrow said:

> I am proud as can be that I voted for it. . . . I don't [mean] to thumb my nose at all the constituents who disagreed with me on it. But I think it's something we had to do, and I think it's [a] bargain price. Where did we make a mistake? We made a mistake by not saying if the ownership of this [ball team] changes, the profits have to be used first to pay off the debt, and then the rest goes in the pocket of the owner. . . . I have to admire Bud Selig. He loves baseball, and he's retiring on the top of his game as commissioner. [But I disagree] with the way he made an awful lot of money on the sale of that club, and we're still paying off the rest of that debt.

3. On November 5, 2019, Governor Tony Evers signed 2020 Wisconsin Assembly Bill 73, a bipartisan bill requiring retailers and the Wisconsin Department of Revenue to stop collecting the baseball stadium sales tax on or before August 31, 2020.

## Chairing the Women's Council

In 1989, Governor Thompson appointed Farrow to the Wisconsin Women's Council, which she would chair for over a decade. The bipartisan council was originally established in 1983 by Governor Tony Earl with the goals of improving the lives of women and girls and working with state businesses and schools to develop initiatives to reduce women's economic and social inequality. When Farrow began serving on the council, she saw it functioning mainly as a "debating society for reproductive rights issues." Farrow said that her Democratic colleagues on the council frequently brought up contraception and abortion, which she opposed and in which, additionally, she saw no legislative future: "They couldn't bring any of those issues to the floor of the Legislature because they couldn't get them passed. They weren't going to debate and lose them there, so instead they debated them at the Women's Council." Farrow suggested members were "priming the press" to look to the council for "good headlines" rather than treating the council as a place to find common ground and craft practical new policies that would have broad support in the Legislature.

The council had already been generating negative headlines for some time. For example, in 1988, chair Mary Kohler made racist remarks about black South Africans, prompting Governor Thompson to request her resignation. When she refused, he took the unusual step of removing her from the council and appointing Representative Susan Vergeront in her place. However, according to Farrow, Vergeront was unable to stop Democratic legislators on the council from grandstanding. As she tells it, in 1991, Governor Thompson finally called Farrow into his office and said, "I want you to chair [the council]. . . . I've got to have you in that chair!" Farrow initially balked. "I did not run on women's issues," she explained, but rather "for good government, for good funding of our cities, for safe roads, for good schools." She regarded her constituency as "both men and women," she said. But then Governor Thompson "put his foot down," and she agreed to chair the council—provided that she could do it on her terms:

> I said, "Alright. I'm only going to take [the chair] on one [condition]: I'm going to change the agenda." He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "I'm going to change the agenda to [women] in the workplace, women getting education, women getting training, women getting medical benefits, and women getting childcare." He said, "That's fine by me!" So that's what I did. I went [and] let the body know what was going to be the future of the body.

Farrow also recalled that Chuck Chvala and Russ Feingold, two prominent Democratic senators who were on the council when she became the chair, treated council meetings far too casually for her taste. During the first few meetings she helmed, she said, the senators sifted through paperwork, "signing constituent letters and pictures for kids." She refused to tolerate this behavior and "read them the riot act":

> They're sitting there busying themselves through the whole meeting, or *leaving* the meeting consistently. And insulting all these women, [the public council members] who came from all over the state to be at this meeting. Well, that got under [my skin]. Every now and then I play the role of the mother hen. So at about the third or fourth meeting, at the end, I said, "I want to have some things understood here." I looked right at [Chvala and Feingold]. I said they're insulting the other members. They asked to be on this council—that's how they got here—and if they can't spend the time at the meetings and be part of the discussions, then I think they should ask for new members from [their] caucus.

Asked how the senators responded to being called out for their behavior, Farrow laughed:

> They were at all the meetings after that! . . . I have to give them credit. They shut up and didn't do battle with me over it. I think they had to, because they wanted the respect of the women in the room, and maybe they legitimately didn't think of it.

Eventually the council moved forward and accomplished many of the things that Farrow wanted it to do. One of her favorite experiences working on the council was helping to create the Transportation Alliance for New Solutions, or TrANS, program, an ongoing program designed to help women and minorities find jobs in the road building industry. To get the program going in the mid-nineties, Farrow worked with a wide range of people from the road building industry, unions, community groups in Milwaukee, and the Department of Transportation (DOT):

> [We had the] community groups screen the applicants [and agree] to be the safety net to get [the women in the program] to the workplace every day; if their ride wasn't there or their car broke down, they had a safety net to call to get to the job. We had the road builders agree that [they would foot the bill for] all of their training. The unions . . . did their part. It was everybody saying, "Forget the old rules, we're going to work on this one together." . . . I am so proud of this program. It became a national model, and several [DOT employees went] around the country talking about it at that time.

Years later, Farrow's efforts on the council resurfaced unexpectedly when Governor Scott McCallum appointed her to be lieutenant governor after Tommy Thompson resigned to lead the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. At a hearing to review her appointment, legislative allies and supporters praised Farrow's long career in government. But she also received sharp criticism from Democratic members of the Legislature. Looking back, Farrow remembered Representatives Pedro Colón and Tom Gable, in particular, "ripping" her for being a person who "[didn't] care for the working man." But then, a woman who had participated in the TrANS Project spoke to the committee:

> [She] gets up, a young woman in a union blue satin jacket with the whole embroidery on

> the back, and [said that] if it hadn't been for the Women's Council and [the TrANS Project] we developed there, she would not have gone from a welfare mother to making $22 an hour. I mean, my jaw dropped. I thought, where did they *find* her? . . . I was amazed. So, yes, the Women's Council did some interesting things.

## Legislative leadership

In addition to chairing the Women's Council, Farrow held many other leadership roles in the Legislature, including serving as senate assistant minority leader in 2001 and as senate assistant majority leader from 1993 to 1998. Farrow noted that working in leadership can be difficult "because you're always going to have someone upset with you. You're never going to have everybody happy." Yet asked if she sought out leadership work, thankless as it can be, she said:

> Darn right. Because I wanted to be in the position to help make the decisions about the agenda. I wanted to be in a position to know what was going on, so I'd know better what advice to give or what to do.

The item at the top of her agenda was reducing government spending, which reflected her core belief that government needs to operate efficiently. In 1993, Farrow offered a bill to create the Commission for the Study of Administrative Value and Efficiency, or SAVE, which Governor Thompson signed into law that year. As SAVE's co-vice chair, Farrow lead a statewide working group of academics, business leaders, state and local government officials, and state agency representatives to develop numerous proposals to reduce government spending.

The committee published a hefty final report of recommendations in January 1995. Yet according to Farrow, SAVE's recommendations were never implemented because state funding that would have paid for incentives to reduce spending ended up going toward education instead. Farrow was not upset that more funding went to Wisconsin schools, but felt frustrated that SAVE had fallen by the wayside as a result. "I walked into [Governor Thompson's] office after [the new school funding plan finally] fell into place and he said, 'You took all my money for my SAVE commission incentives!'" Farrow recalled. She added:

> We had [then-Secretary of Administration James] Klauser and three former department of administration secretaries on [the SAVE] commission, plus a bunch of other people who brought an awful lot to it. We gave a report that, to this day, you could take off the shelf and say, "Why don't we start trying some of this stuff?"

Although some of her efforts never came to fruition, Farrow was proud to help create

WisconsinEye, the media service providing live and archived coverage of state proceedings. With Senator Tim Carpenter as her co-chair, Farrow led the committee that first launched the network in 2007. Today, she continues to serve as chair of the nonprofit network's advisory board. She takes pride in the network and its reputation for fairness, which Farrow credits to its financial independence and nonpartisan content:

> We're the only one of the 22 public networks in the country that receives no state funding. In the same manner, we have no state control over us. The only way they control us in the building is to adjourn a meeting that we're at, because otherwise we have full right to be there as long as they're in session. Our responsibility is to cover both chambers when they're in session, the Supreme Court when it's in session, and cover every committee of both houses once a term. But . . . we [cover] far more than that, and then we do our other programming, our newsmaker interviews and what have you. What was driving me was to have quality in the picture, so that it looked very professional, and balance to the way were doing it, so that one side or the other wouldn't say, "Oh, you're really conservative," or, "Oh, you're really liberal." Over a period of months, you'll see a complete balance. We've worked very hard to keep that. I'm very proud of it.

## Opportunities for higher office

Although many people viewed her as a potentially formidable candidate, Farrow declined to seek higher office at various times in her career. Reflecting on this choice, Farrow said:

> I never knocked on anyone's door asking, "I want to run. What do you think?" I had people coming to me constantly. I really did. In '98, they really asked me to run against Herb Kohl [to represent Wisconsin in the U.S. Senate], to the point where I went out to Washington and talked to God knows how many people [about entering the senate race]. . . . But I consistently have said [that I feel]—and still do feel—very comfortable with making that decision. Wisconsin is my home. I love this state. I love the people of this state and everything about it. I didn't have to go out to that crazy place!

She added:

> I would have been a daunting candidate against Herb Kohl. He would have had to spend more money than he did, because I think I had enough of a positive track record by then. But I knew by then that the nasty campaigning had begun. I knew votes I took [at the capitol] on motions that the minority brings up when they're forming the budget and you're in the majority . . . motions [the minority knows you will oppose], and then it comes out in a campaign, 'She voted *against*"—whatever their motion was that our entire caucus opposed [and never would have had] a chance. . . . They would make it sound like I was against motherhood and apple pie!

Farrow said that she did not want to put herself or her family through a vicious campaign. However, she did indicate some willingness to run for governor, if the circumstances were right:

> But did I ever want to be governor? Yes. I would have loved to have had that opportunity. That SAVE commission book would have been on my desk, and I probably would have been a one-term governor, because I would have changed so much that I couldn't have been reelected.

More precisely, Farrow said she would have run if Governor Thompson had decided not to run for reelection in either 1994 or 1998. She also said that she came close at one point to running against Scott McCallum for lieutenant governor, a position he held from 1986 to 2001, but ultimately decided not to because odds seemed slim that Governor Thompson would resign to take a federal appointment, thereby opening the door for her to become governor: "I looked at the tea leaves and said, 'Tommy won't leave.'" However, Farrow miscalculated. In 2001, President George W. Bush did ask Governor Thompson, Farow's old friend, to head the Department of Health and Human Services, and, as she said with a shrug, "the rest is history." Scott McCallum, Thompson's successor, appointed Farrow as lieutenant governor.

As Governor McCallum prepared to announce that he'd tapped Farrow to become the new lieutenant governor, he anticipated facing the question "why her?" because she had once considered running against him for the same role. As predicted, reporters asked the question at their first joint press conference, when McCallum introduced her as his appointee. "I loved his answer," she said. "It was a clever one: he said he wanted someone who really wanted the job." She laughed. "Just at a different time than I wanted it originally!"

Farrow described serving as Wisconsin's first female lieutenant governor as "a marvelous way" to end her career in state government. "I *loved* it. I thought by then I really knew this state—I didn't. I had some of the most amazing experiences in some of the most amazing places." She put 160,000 miles on her car during the 18 months she served, visiting thousands of people in Wisconsin communities large and small.

She also became an active member of the Aerospace States Association (ASA), a national organization of lieutenant governors, corporations, leaders of educational institutions, and state legislators dedicated to promoting space-related business development. Farrow said that she found the ASA meetings she attended fascinating, and that she would have become the ASA's next chair if she and Governor McCallum had been reelected.

McCallum and Farrow lost their bid for reelection in 2002, however. Asked to describe their campaign and her assessment of the outcome, Farrow said:

> The campaign was fascinating and hectic. Again, I was seeing more of the state and

talking to people. We're such a balanced state, and I didn't have a negative feeling about it. I went into it certainly wanting our ticket to win. But so often you see the state move back and forth, from Tony Earl to Tommy, and now to Jim Doyle and now to Walker, and what will come after that? Because we are [almost] equally divided. So I felt badly, [but] I can't say I was shocked.

## Conclusion

Throughout her interview, Farrow expressed pride in what she was able to accomplish in the Legislature and executive office, as well as disappointment about legislation and policy plans that she was not able to see come to fruition during her tenure in state government. She also described herself as deeply appreciative for the opportunities that enriched her life throughout her 25-year career in local and state politics. As a government-besotted girl sitting in her sixth-grade civics class, she never dreamed of working in government herself. Yet by staying open to new possibilities, she has always kept her own flame going strong:

> When I look back, I did not have a plan for my life. I know a lot of people have these very ornate plans: when they finish college, they're going to do this for five years, then they're going to do that, and then their endgame is that. I liken my life to walking down a long hall with many doors. As I go by, some of those doors open and some don't. When a door opens, I look in, and if it looks like something I should be doing at the time, I do it. That's really what I have done. ■