

MERIT SHOP

CONTRACTOR

WISCONSIN

**REBECCA KLEEFISCH REPORTS
FROM THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL**
WISCONSIN WORKERS ARE
OUR BEST NATURAL RESOURCE

**THE TWO STEVES, NATIONAL ABC
BOARD CHAIRS SEPARATED BY 30 YEARS**

& ELECTION POLITICS

HOW IT STARTED, AND HOW IT'S GOING
THE 2021-22 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

ALSO INSIDE:
**AFTER 50 YEARS, THERE'S
STILL ONE CONSTANT**
PAGE 5



ABCWI.ORG

The Ideal Experience.



MADISON • 608-241-4092
MILWAUKEE • 414-463-5438
OSHKOSH • 920-235-2411
LA CROSSE • 608-784-4862
GREEN BAY • 920-235-2411
TOMAHAWK • 920-235-2411

IDEAL
CRANE RENTAL, INC.

IDEALCRANERENTAL.COM

CRANE RENTAL • FORKLIFTS • MANLIFTS • TRUCKING • SALES • SERVICE • RENTALS



TABLE OF CONTENTS

JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2022

- 5 President's Message**
After 50 years, there's still one constant
- 5 Event Reminders**
- 6 How it Started, and How it's Going**
The 2021-2022 Legislative Session
- 10 Wisconsin Workers**
Are Our Best Natural Resource
- 12 Solving Workforce Woes by Investing in People**
- 13 50th Anniversary Retrospective**
- 14 Wisconsin Election Integrity**
Status Update
- 16 Some Things Change. Some Things Don't.**
- 18 Politics is Local**
(But it Takes a Village to Get Things Done)
- 20 Our Two Steves**
- 21 Associated Builders and Contractors New Members**



Website: abcwi.org
ABC National: abc.org

-  www.facebook.com/abcwi
-  www.linkedin.com/company/abc-of-wisconsin
-  twitter.com/abcwi
-  [YouTube.com/TheABCWI](https://www.youtube.com/TheABCWI)
-  [ABCWisconsin](https://www.instagram.com/ABCWisconsin)

Merit Shop Contractor Wisconsin is published six times annually by Associated Builders and Contractors of Wisconsin, Inc. (ISSN# 10642978)
5330 Wall St., Madison, WI 53718. Periodicals Postage Paid, Madison, WI and other additional mailing offices. (UPS 340-650). Subscription price is \$50 per year.

President and Publisher: John Mielke
Managing Editor: Kyle Schwarm
Associate Editor: James Debilzen
Art Director: Jayne Laste Design Solutions LLC

For membership information, contact Deanna Regel at ABC of Wisconsin (608) 244-5883 or fax (608) 244-2401

Postmaster, send address changes to:
ABC of Wisconsin, 5330 Wall St.,
Madison, WI 53718



Building protection for your business

If you're a commercial contractor, we can
design construction coverages just for you.

We'll provide:

- Experienced safety services
- Knowledgeable claims staff
- Local underwriting

**We're proud to be ABC-endorsed, and we look forward
to building a relationship with you. Let's talk.**

[sentry.com](https://www.sentry.com)

Property and casualty coverages are underwritten, and safety services are provided, by a member of the Sentry Insurance Group, StevensPoint, WI. For a complete listing of companies, visit [sentry.com](https://www.sentry.com). Policies, coverages, benefits, and discounts are not available in all states. See policy for complete coverage details.

FROM OUR PRESIDENT

After 50 years, there's still one constant



MANY OF US WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THAT WISCONSIN AND THE WORLD WOULD BE BACK TO “NORMAL” BY THE TIME JANUARY 2022 ROLLED AROUND. Unfortunately, at least for the time being, we must live with the “new normal” as we attempt to move back to the “old normal.”

As we recently returned to some “normal” things, such as in-person networking events and conferences, we saw a mask mandate in Wisconsin’s second largest county extended again and again, while 71 other counties lived life without the mandate. We also see what seems to be never-ending court battles over whether vaccines can be mandated for employees of privately-owned companies doing federal contract work or whether the government can use the OSHA Emergency Temporary Standard to vaccines for privately-owned employers with 100 or more employees.

If the last two years has shown us anything, it’s that things don’t stay the same, and that is not always positive. One thing is certain. Too often, government policies erode free enterprise and that’s not good for business. That’s a “normal” we can expect will continue.

As we look back over the 50 years of ABC of Wisconsin, we see that we can combat bad policy with member involvement. It’s what our founding chapter members did decades ago. They came together to start this chapter because they had something in common. Labor unions made it extremely difficult for merit contractors to do business in construction, so involvement was critical to the survival of the organization. While things are not as intense on the union front today, the founding members remind

us that the current environment we have could be gone in an instant. Some of the recent policies and executive orders in Washington should remind us of this.

During my nearly 30 years with ABC, we have seen governors come and go and legislative champions and nemesis’ reverse roles. As an organization, we can continue to play a key role in getting champions of free enterprise elected. We are hopeful Rebecca Kleefisch is successful in her transition from ABC Jobs Ambassador to Governor of Wisconsin, and that pro-merit, pro-free enterprise legislators stay in the majority in the Wisconsin Legislature.

There is no “new normal” in the key to legislative success. It requires good old-fashioned participation in politics. That’s why it’s wonderful when ABC members get in the game and donate their hard-earned money and sacrifice time away from their businesses and families to elect pro-merit candidates. Just like our founders, we know it must be done to make our state a better place for running construction companies. Thanks to 50 years of member participation, our state is in the top five for construction climates in the nation, but it hasn’t always been this way. We all need to work together to keep it that way. abc.wisconsin.gov

“
IF THE LAST TWO YEARS HAS SHOWN US ANYTHING, IT’S THAT THINGS DON’T STAY THE SAME, AND THAT IS NOT ALWAYS POSITIVE.”



- **SKILL COMPETITION**
West Bend, Jan. 21
- **THE CONSTRUCTION TEAM**
Brookfield, Nov. 17
- **PROJECTS OF DISTINCTION AWARDS BANQUET**
Pewaukee, Jan. 27
- **SUPERCON '22**
Wis. Dells, Feb. 9-10
- **50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION**
Wis. Dells, Feb. 10
- **FOREMAN FUNDAMENTALS**
Online, Feb. 21
- **THE CONSTRUCTION TEAM**
Madison, Feb. 25
- **NETWORKING SOCIAL**
Plover, Mar. 10

Website: abcwi.org
ABC National: abc.org



HOW IT STARTED, & HOW IT'S GOING

THE 2021 – 2022 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

By John Schulze – ABC of Wisconsin Director of Legal & Government Affairs

According to the calendar, the current legislative session is half over, but in reality, the official work of the Wisconsin Assembly and Senate will likely end after the first quarter 2022 before they start campaigning in their new districts for the November 2022 election. Now is as good a time look at the score so far.

The 2021-2022 session began very similar to how the 2019-2021 session started, with the typical number of new legislators and with Republicans having overwhelming majorities in both houses but lacking the numbers necessary to successfully override Evers' vetoes. The lingering effects of COVID-19 social distancing put a damper on the usual collaboration and compromise that occurs as part of the lawmaking process. Most legislative Democrats skipped their in-person inauguration and some votes, due to concerns about COVID-19. Many requested the ability to attend and vote virtually. Legislative Republicans responded by implementing necessary safety precautions and arguing that legislators should show up for work in-person like other Wisconsinites. This led to absurd situations, like when Republican legislators sat in the legislative chamber watching Gov. Evers on big screen TVs during his annual State of the State address from an undisclosed, remote location.

WINS

Employer Safe Harbor from COVID-19 lawsuits. An early 2021 win was the new law protecting Wisconsin employers and their employees, agents and independent contractors from being held liable for ordinary negligence claims associated with a COVID-19 infection. This civil immunity does not apply if an act or omission involves reckless or wanton conduct

or intentional misconduct, but the safe harbor applies retroactively to claims accruing on or after March 1, 2020. Also, the protection does not have an end date and covers all mutations and variants. This legislation took significant negotiations with Gov. Evers, who vetoed an earlier version.

As a concession to the governor, the one-week waiting period for unemployment insurance benefits was

temporarily removed. While several business trade associations helped craft this compromise, ABC of Wisconsin Chapter President John Mielke was instrumental in making sure that construction jobsites and the specific nature of ABC members' industry was also included under the safe harbor. More than half the states have passed COVID-19 liability protection, but Illinois and Minnesota still have not;



PPP loan forgiveness. Thanks to significant lobbying and your willingness to contact your state legislators about this important issue, ABC was able to work with other business trade associations to make sure Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan forgiveness was state and federally income tax exempt. We became aware of this issue, thanks to an early heads-up from ABC of Wisconsin Legislative Committee member Ryan Gartman of CLA. In Wisconsin, this \$400 million fix was done outside of the usual state budget process that occurs mid-year, allowing ABC members to avoid an unexpected early 2021 tax bill.

2021-2023 Wisconsin State Budget. Regardless of political party, governors who are preparing to face the voters usually introduce a moderate, centrist, pragmatic budget. But not Gov. Evers. His initial two-year spending plan was a liberal wish list that overwhelmingly overshadowed a few small, good policy items, such as \$500,000 to expand youth apprenticeship, and allowing the self-employed to deduct their health insurance premiums. Included in his original draft were:

- Repeal Right to Work
- Repeal Project Labor Agreement neutrality
- Re-create State Prevailing Wage
- Keep road funding relatively flat
- Create a contractor registration program with fines for not participating
- Increase fines for companies that misclassify workers
- Increase local government public bidding threshold from \$25,000 to \$50,000
- \$1 billion in new taxes on employers and individuals
- Legalize marijuana
- Hire 300 more state employees
- Increase the minimum wage
- Restrict school choice
- Implement more gun control regulations

While several of the ideas were nonstarters among Republican legislators, ABC and its members worked hard to make sure the anti-merit and anti-contractor ideas were successfully removed. After months of negotiations, eight legislative Democrats joined all Republican legislators to support the GOP rewrite of Gov. Evers' 2021-2023 state budget, who then signed the bill after issuing 50 relatively minor vetoes. Other budget highlights:

- The two-year budget spends \$87 billion, which is more than 5% higher than the 2019-2021 budget, but \$4 billion less than Evers' original proposal, would have increased state spending by 10%

- \$3 billion in income and property tax relief, cutting taxes by \$1,000 for the typical family. The owner of a median-valued home would see their property taxes drop by \$200

- \$1.5 billion capital budget

- \$120 million more for local roads

The conventional wisdom was that Evers did not veto the entire budget even though it lacked several of his highest priorities because doing so could have resulted in a stalemate that would risk additional federal COVID-19 relief dollars. Unlike some states and the federal government, Wisconsin continues to spend at previous years' levels until a new state budget is approved. Several Republican legislators would have happily accepted living under the old budget than voting for tax increase and several other anti-employer ideas. Also, Gov. Evers has more than \$2 billion in federal COVID-19 relief that he can allocate at his discretion without legislative Republican oversight or approval.

Working with who we can for ABC members. Gov. Evers, is by most measures, a progressive Madison Democrat with a very different political philosophy than ABC's free-enterprise, pro-merit mantra. However, the ABC of Wisconsin government affairs team was able to work with the Evers administration on a few items; specifically:

- Extension of Work Search Waiver. ABC was able to work with the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) to extend the four-jobs-a-week work search waiver for seasonal layoffs on unemployment insurance (UI) from the usual 12 weeks until May 23, 2021. ABC was supportive of work search requirements for those doing work searches during the height of the pandemic because it posed a health issue for both employees and employers. Also, everyone acknowledged that regardless of the cause, the DWD was and still is having difficulty processing UI claims in a timely manner. To add the tracking of work search requirements would have only delayed getting resources to those who need it. As a reminder, all union construction employees are exempt from the work search waiver.

- EdVest for Apprenticeship. Gov. Evers also signed into law a state income tax change that allows 527 Education Savings Accounts (known as EdVest accounts in Wisconsin) to be used for apprenticeship tuition and related expenses.

LOSE SOME

While ABC had some big wins this year, there were a couple of action items that could not overcome one of Gov. Evers' nearly 50 vetoes. Of specific interest to ABC members:

Veto of Education Fairness Act. Under this proposal, apprenticeship tuition would have been treated like college and university tuition for income tax deduction purposes. It was championed by ABC of Wisconsin, local chambers of commerce and the Wisconsin Technical College System District Boards Association as an "all of the above approach" to paying for apprenticeship tuition and getting more people into the skilled trades. Even though a Democrat voted for it in the Legislature, the construction unions pay for apprenticeship differently, and successfully lobbied Gov. Evers to veto the bill.

Veto of Personal Property Tax Repeal. While there have been improvements and exemptions over the years, this 170-year-old unfair and costly tax on small businesses sticks around like a vestigial tail. Gov. Evers vetoed the legislation, in part because he wanted it tied to more tax dollars for local governments, additional reporting requirements for businesses, and a continuation of the tax on some personal property. ABC and other business trade associations will continue to work this session on a compromise with the Evers administration.

Sprinkler systems again required for new apartments with three plus units. In 2003, under former Democrat Gov. Jim Doyle, Wisconsin started requiring new multifamily apartment buildings with three or more units to have sprinkler systems. Under Walker, the state returned the requirement to 20 units. The Evers administration reversed the Walker administration and again requires multifamily apartment building plans with three or more dwelling units to have automatic sprinkler systems, unless the building meets the narrowly defined exceptions outlined in Wis. Admin. Code SPS § 362.0903(5).

GOING FORWARD

On offense, in addition to trying to find a compromise for personal property tax, ABC of Wisconsin will continue to attempt to address the ever-growing morass that is the Department of Safety and Professional Services commercial plan review backlog. Currently, a bill is moving through the legislative committee process that would exempt certain routine building and plumbing plans from DSPS review if they are signed off on by an engineer or architect, or a master plumber if the plumbing plan has 25 or fewer fixtures. The goal is to have it on Gov.

Evers' desk before construction season starts again in spring 2022. We are also working on an increase in apprenticeship completion grants, and allowing the construction of more renewable projects by entities other than public utilities who traditionally bid out to only union companies.

On defense, ABC is working to prevent changes to the state's uniform commercial building code. Lt. Gov. and Democratic U.S. Senate Candidate Mandela Barnes led a climate change task force that produced several ideas to increase regulations and utility costs. One of the proposals that has already been introduced as a standalone bill would not only change the statewide building code to be as "green" as possible, but also allow municipalities to implement local building codes that will increase the cost of commercial construction. We are also attempting to prevent an idea being considered by another of Gov. Evers' task forces that would make other contractors on a construction project liable if one of them was shown to have misclassified workers. Lastly, there is a one-sided lien law reform proposal that would benefit general contractors at the expense of specialty and sub-contractors that we do not want to become law.

ABC is also involved in several lawsuits that are not dependent on the legislative session. Last year, the city of Madison unanimously passed an ordinance requiring bird-safe glass treatment on many new buildings and structures, and the city of Wauwatosa is considering following suit. Preliminary legal analysis indicates that the statewide uniform commercial building code preempts the Madison ordinance and any future similar ordinances. After several unsuccessful meetings with city of Madison attorneys, ABC of Wisconsin partnered with the Wisconsin Institute of Law and Liberty (WILL) to sue the city of Madison. ABC also intervened in a pending lawsuit attempting to prevent Gov. Evers from publishing the names of businesses that have had employees test positive for COVID-19 and the number of employees who have tested positive. Hopefully, this case will be resolved sometime in 2022.

And then it begins all over again. All 99 representatives and 17 of the 33 state senators are up for re-election in November 2022, as are all statewide constitutional officers (governor, lieutenant governor, secretary of state, and state treasurer). Several offices will be guaranteed to have new faces because of either already announced retirements, or current office holders seeking higher office. Thanks to your support of time, campaign contributions, and willingness to reach out to elected officials, ABC will continue to work hard for those who are literally building Wisconsin. [abc.wisconsin](http://abc.wisconsin.gov)

THE CHAMPION OF MERIT EAGLE AWARD

The Champion of Merit Eagle Award is the national recognition for those federal legislators who support open competition and free enterprise in Construction.



U.S. Rep. Mike Gallagher



U.S. Rep. Glenn Grothman



U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson



U.S. Rep. Tom Tiffany

FROM 25TH TO 5TH



Your membership with ABC and political contributions through the ABC PAC has led to a decade of pro-merit, free enterprise victories.

2021

- COVID Liability protection for employers, including contractors and their job sites
- Defeated upstream liability for worker misclassification
- UI Work Search waiver extended
- Forgiven PPP loans exempt from Wisconsin income tax
- Defeated contractor registration program with fines for not participating
- Defeated increase fines for companies that accidentally misclassify workers
- Defeated doubling of local government public bidding threshold
- Defeated return of Wisconsin prevailing wage, and repeal of Right to Work and Project Labor Agreement Neutrality

2020

- Edvest / College Savings Accounts can be used for apprenticeship tuition and expenses
- Defeated attacks on lowest responsible bidder and design-bid-build for public projects
- Defeated unnecessary fire and smoke damper inspection regulation

2019

- Municipality prohibited from requiring an applicant to submit a building permit in both paper and electronic form for one-family or two-family dwellings
- Defeated pro-union preference for public construction projects
- Defeated return of Wisconsin prevailing wage, and repeal of Right to Work and Project Labor Agreement Neutrality

2018

- Prohibit local governments from enforcing their own laws related to hours, overtime and benefits, or minimum wage requirements for public work projects
- Prohibit local governments from exceeding state's occupational licensing requirements

- Prevented local governments from enacting their own employee scheduling and hours regulations
- Shortened the time limits for construction lawsuits from 10 years to seven years
- Apprentice ratio reform
- Personal property tax exemption for equipment and machinery
- High school seniors can participate in adult apprenticeship

2017

- Sales tax exemption for construction materials expanded to UW Schools, UW-extensions, and tech colleges.
- State sales and use tax exemption for lump sum contracts is expanded to apply to all construction contracts and to subcontractors that include personal property that is less than 10% of total project cost
- Defeated attempt to eliminate exams for licensed plumbers, electricians, automatic fire sprinkler system fitters, and automatic fire sprinkler contractors
- Wisconsin prevailing wage law repealed
- Statewide Project Labor Agreement neutrality
- No government mandated project labor agreement on Foxconn Project

2017 - 2016

- Sales tax exemption pass through for construction materials for many nonprofits
- No government mandated project labor agreement on Bucks Arena or surrounding Deer District
- Reformed state prevailing wage
- Passed right to work
- Reformed commercial plan review for hospices and community based residential facilities
- Statewide commercial building code became law
- Eliminated employer requirement to track and record salaried employee hours
- Repealed prevailed prevailing wage on quasi-public projects

2021 - 5TH

2020 - 5TH

2019 - 8TH

2018 - 12TH

2017 - 15TH

2016 - 22ND

2015 - 25TH

The Merit Shop Scorecard is based on state policies and programs that promote open competition and free enterprise for the construction sector and highlights the state's exemplary business environment for merit shop construction contractors. The scorecard also identifies states where economic improvements are needed. The rankings are based on seven criteria: project labor agreements, prevailing wage laws, right-to-work laws, public-private partnerships, workforce development, career and technical education and job growth rate.

THE BEST IS YET TO COME.

WISCONSIN WORKERS

ARE OUR BEST NATURAL RESOURCE.

By Rebecca Kleefisch – Former ABC of Wisconsin Jobs Ambassador and Wisconsin Lt. Gov.

Countless leaders and candidates for political office make this statement with no intention of actually affecting change, but I had a unique front row seat to witness some of Wisconsin's hardest workers and problem-solve with them directly.

Before I launched my campaign for Governor, I had the honor of serving as the "Jobs Ambassador" for Associated Builders and Contractors of Wisconsin ... you. It was a natural fit for me. In my role as Wisconsin's Lieutenant Governor, I focused my time on policy ideas to help solve the then-emerging "skills gap" crisis facing Wisconsin. Not having enough workers with the skills to fill available jobs hurts our businesses and workers seeking jobs. To make our economy work, we need to do everything we can to shrink this gap. But we must also acknowledge that we need more workers, period, and a culture that celebrates the dignity of work and rewards it.

While some politicians point to low unemployment as a sign of our economy's success, they completely ignore that Wisconsin simply does not have enough workers with the skills needed to fill the jobs we have available. Our economy cannot keep up with demand for products and services. Only looking at unemployment rates and ignoring our state's ballooning workforce shortage is the wrong approach to get our economy back on track. We need to increase our workforce participation rate, and make work pay for those who join ... or re-join ... the economy.

One of the best ways to enter Wisconsin's economy is through careers that can never be outsourced, are recession-proof and require skills that are portable. To me, that's the construction industry. I'm always concerned when I hear stories from elites who think jobs in building are dirty, dangerous, or unworthy of public support. What I see on jobsites throughout Wisconsin are dedicated employees taking full advantage of tremendous opportunities to live their American Dreams – all without being saddled by burdensome student loans. These employees are dedicated workers for their companies who make a real difference in their communities with the work they contribute to the betterment of Wisconsin.



Former ABC of Wisconsin Jobs Ambassador Rebecca Kleefisch is poised to become a jobs governor for Wisconsin.

During my time as Jobs Ambassador for ABC, I had the opportunity to meet hundreds of business owners and employees within the construction industry. Each had a unique story and perspective, but all shared a common objective: the American Dream.

I met Jessica, who, as a kid, told her mom that she wanted to buy her a house when she grew up. Jessica's friends are going into debt at college, but not her. At 19, she has picked a career path that gives her a bright future. When I talked to Jessica, she was beaming with pride when she told me she was already saving for a house for her mother: "I'm finally in a place where I can do that for my mom."

WHAT I SEE ON JOBSITES ARE DEDICATED EMPLOYEES TAKING FULL ADVANTAGE OF TREMENDOUS OPPORTUNITIES TO LIVE THEIR AMERICAN DREAMS – ALL WITHOUT BEING SADDLED BY BURDENSOME STUDENT LOANS.

I met Jessie, a second-generation owner of a plumbing contracting business. Her senior plumbers make up to \$40 an hour. Jessie runs a successful small business while at the same time successfully running her household – living her American Dream.

I also met Dylan, who was working as an apprentice and getting paid hourly while attending school, a benefit no university student enjoys. Dylan introduced me to his buddy Mason, and they showed me the new trucks they were able to afford because of their work choices. What Wisconsinite shouldn't want a job where they can afford that new truck, snowmobile, or cabin – all at a significantly cheaper cost than a four-year college degree.

Wisconsin needs to look hard at long-term solutions to our skilled worker shortage, starting with changing the perspectives in our K-12 schools. By partnering with schools and promoting apprenticeship programs, we can funnel students into careers that fit their interests and financial goals rather than a one-size-fits-all approach of exclusively pushing students to four-year colleges.

Apprenticeship opportunities should be well presented in academic and career planning. Advisors within our education system need to be at the forefront of removing the modern stigma of construction careers. As I have traveled the state, I have seen firsthand how construction jobs are sometimes perceived as a “last resort” or of less value than fields requiring four year degrees. This view is antiquated and doesn't match up with the high tier jobs in the building industry. Wisconsin is home to hundreds of businesses with good paying jobs that give workers the flexibility to enjoy time with their families and Wisconsin's natural resources, all while avoiding going into the Wisconsin average of \$31,000 in student loan debt.

Unlike higher education, completing an apprenticeship program practically guarantees employment, protects students from the burden of college debt, and promises unique skills that can be used anywhere and apply to in-demand jobs.

It's past time that we stop paying lip service to supporting the construction industry talent pipeline, and we start making policy investments into the future of Wisconsin's skilled workforce. Wisconsin doesn't need more graduates with degrees they can't use; we need more HVAC workers, carpenters and plumbers. We need to put trades and vocational training in every K-12 school district and we must double our number of youth apprenticeships.

Current Wisconsin law permits high school juniors and seniors to be youth apprentices. Wisconsin's Department of Workforce Development began a youth apprenticeship program 25 years ago, but there are still only 4,300 students per year who participate. That's less than 1.7% of Wisconsin high school students. Think about all the kids missing out on an educational opportunity that would allow them to learn career skills – and earn a paycheck – while they're in high school.

Many students are missing out on career-building opportunities at the expense of being pigeonholed into four-year college degrees

that may not fit their actual dreams. Wisconsin needs to do a better job of making sure students know of these opportunities, and provide them with the tools they need to take advantage of them. Unfortunately, we currently have a governor who cares more about catering to the educational establishment than he does making a difference in people's lives.

Tony Evers recently vetoed legislation that would have provided more apprenticeship opportunities across many Wisconsin industries. The legislation would have given apprentices the same tuition tax benefit currently provided to college students. With his veto pen, Tony Evers chose to insinuate construction career learning was less than college learning, perpetrating ugly, outdated stereotypes. He caved to the education elitists and bureaucrats rather than stand up for Wisconsin students who have determined that attending a four-year university doesn't help them reach their goals.

To tackle the workforce shortage, we need a governor who will get serious about ensuring we have the workers needed for the jobs Wisconsin businesses are already offering. As governor, it will be my priority to reverse horrible decisions like this one and others.

It goes beyond making sure that our youth know of the opportunities available to them. We need to look at reimplementing an aggressive talent attraction program. The Walker-Kleefisch Administration prioritized that and Tony Evers has turned back the clock. Additionally, Evers has consistently supported policies that encourage workers to stay on the sidelines while employers hang “help wanted” signs. He supported expanded pandemic unemployment benefits that lasted well beyond other states Wisconsin competes against; all while businesses suffered and begged for more help.

Wisconsin's workers are our greatest natural resource. Workers like Jessica, Jessie, Dylan, and Mason are proof of that. My time as Jobs Ambassador for ABC showed me that we need real leadership that will put hard-working people first and match the needs of our economy with the priorities of the government.

As governor, I'll do exactly that. 



DACC O **MOBILE OFFICE**
SALES • RENTALS

Borrow our experience
... you can bet on it!

WBE

800-236-8518

WWW.DACCOTRAILERS.COM

WELLS CARGO

The advertisement features a photograph of a white mobile office trailer parked on a dirt lot. The trailer has a door on the side and a ramp at the back. The background shows a clear sky and some trees.

Greta Neubauer, D-66th Assembly District



DEMOCRAT VIEWPOINT: **SOLVING WORKFORCE WOES BY INVESTING IN PEOPLE**

By Assembly Democratic Leader Greta Neubauer

In late December, I had the honor of being elected the leader of the Wisconsin Assembly Democrats. I want to take the opportunity to introduce myself to you today and talk about what I will fight for. I came to the Legislature as an organizer. My focus has always been on building coalitions, writing strategic plans, and creating opportunities for meaningful action that moves Wisconsin forward.

Last month, I joined a local business group in my hometown of Racine for a breakfast Q & A to discuss the issues facing our community. One of the biggest discussions we had focused on Wisconsin's workforce shortage.

Wisconsin's people shortage is not a new topic of conversation. When I came into office in early 2018, then-Gov. Walker was touting a \$6.8 million campaign to attract millennials from Chicago. The COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated this issue as many people, especially women, left the workforce to care for family, baby boomers retired early, those with underlying health conditions fear becoming sick, and members of our community have passed away or are unable to work due to complications from COVID-19.

While many Republicans blame long-expired enhanced unemployment benefits for the workforce shortage, Wisconsin's unemployment levels are at record lows. It's clear that our workforce challenge has deeper roots: instead of rehashing tired partisan talking points, we need to break down barriers keeping people out of the workforce. In the process, we can make life better for all of Wisconsin's working people.

Whether it's helping Wisconsinites access affordable childcare and healthcare, family leave or training opportunities, Democrats are focused on the issues that working people face every day. In 2021, I served on the Joint Committee on Finance — the Legislature's budget-writing committee — where I worked with Gov. Tony Evers, Senate Democrats, and across the aisle to push for policies that would help Wisconsin's working families to thrive.

Accessible Childcare

During the budget process, the Joint Finance Committee approved \$10 million in funding to create a public-private partnership to cover the cost of childcare for existing and new employees, which will help alleviate one of the biggest barriers to reentry in the workforce.

The Evers administration is making sure that Wisconsinites are able to afford the cost of care by dramatically increasing support through the WI SHARES program from 35% to 80%. Under this expansion, some families will save as much as \$5,669 per year on childcare. Despite Republican cuts to the governor's budget, legislative Democrats are working to find bipartisan ways to further expand access to childcare for families across Wisconsin.

Health Care Affordability

As we continue to cope with almost two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, affordable and accessible healthcare is more important than ever for Wisconsinites. We need to finally expand BadgerCare,

invest in caregivers and local health clinics, reduce the cost of prescription drugs, eliminate racial disparities in health outcomes, and ensure mental healthcare access for both our kids and adults.

By expanding BadgerCare, we would not only allow more working Wisconsinites to access affordable healthcare coverage, but also bring in additional federal dollars. Unpaid care raises the cost of healthcare for everyone, including businesses. Rejecting the BadgerCare expansion is fiscally and socially irresponsible when we stand to help so many and save so much.

Family Leave

Wisconsin — and the U.S. as a whole — is far behind other countries when it comes to family medical leave, including parental leave. Only 11% of the U.S. workforce is currently covered by an employer-sponsored paid family leave program; however, those who need this benefit most, low-income workers, are extremely unlikely to be able to take time off to take care of family. No American should have to make the awful choice between putting food on the table and caring for their loved ones, especially in the middle of this pandemic.

We need to increase access to family leave in Wisconsin, so I co-sponsored a bill that would allow us to do this in an equitable, self-sustaining way. LRB-0323, the Family Medical Leave Insurance Act, would create an opt-in, state-run insurance program, similar to Wisconsin's current Unemployment Insurance program, that would allow employees of businesses with at least 25 permanent employees and self-employed people to take family leave to care for loved ones.

Addressing Inflation

Finally, I'd like to hit on an important topic — inflation.

Inflation is a challenge facing families across our nation this year, driven by COVID-related disruptions across our workforce and our economy. High inflation means that each dollar is not going quite as far, which makes it harder to stretch paychecks until the end of the month for working families here in Wisconsin.

The good news is that many economists are predicting that as supply chain problems resolve and fuel prices continue to fall, inflation levels will come back down. However, right now Wisconsin consumers and small businesses are having to deal with late deliveries, backlogged goods, and other disruptions this holiday season.

In order to address our supply chain and control the costs of raw materials, we must get this pandemic under control by encouraging every resident to get vaccinated, to get boosted, to wear masks and to provide the resources that local governments, schools and businesses need to support public safety. Simultaneously, we need to provide more resources for apprenticeships and other training programs — like those provided by the building trades in Wisconsin — to fill critical gaps in the workforce that keeps our supply chain running smoothly.

We know that working people in Wisconsin deserve better, and I am ready to fight for these priorities in the year ahead. I look forward to partnering with you all to accomplish them. Here's to a new year and building a Wisconsin where every person can thrive. [abcWisconsin](#)



Bruce Gilbert

“Wes Meilahn, he had Oshkosh Ready Mix, which was Courtney and Plummer at that time ... but I sold to Wes and I stopped up to see him and he said, ‘Bruce, how come you don’t belong to ABC?’ I said, ‘Well, nobody’s asked me.’ He said, ‘Well, I’m asking you.’”

“I was the 19th member and they were so excited; not about me, but because I was so close to Milwaukee ... and I was also union at the time. They were so excited, they thought, ‘We’re in heaven now. We’re knocking on the doors of Milwaukee.’”

“When I first joined ABC, I was a union company. I had a contract. They (union) never gave me much of an opportunity to negotiate. ‘Here’s a contract! Sign it, or we’ll strike.’ Well, I owed the bank up to my nose, so you can’t take a strike. This was in ’72, I think. When the next contract came up, they knew I belonged to ABC and they sat down, they said, ‘We’ll negotiate.’ Then that went on until 1990, when they struck us. I refused some of their stuff, so they struck us and I was so glad that I had the support of ABC because I could have never survived without ABC’s backing.”

BRUCE GILBERT,
Cedar Lake Sand & Gravel, charter member of ABC of Wisconsin and the first member from the Milwaukee area to join ABC.

Do you feel like something’s missing?

Without The Daily Reporter, chances are you’re not getting enough:

- Project bid listings.
- Construction industry news.
- Sales lead opportunities from public notices.

Special member rate



The Daily Reporter is in your mailbox five days a week with project bid listings and construction news PLUS you can visit us any time at dailyreporter.com.

As a special membership benefit, you’ll SAVE \$36 on print/online combo subscription or \$25 on a digital-only subscription.

Subscribe online! <https://subscribe.dailyreporter.com/MemberRate-ABC>
 Subscribe on the phone! Call 800-451-9998 and request Promo Code “MemberRate-ABC”



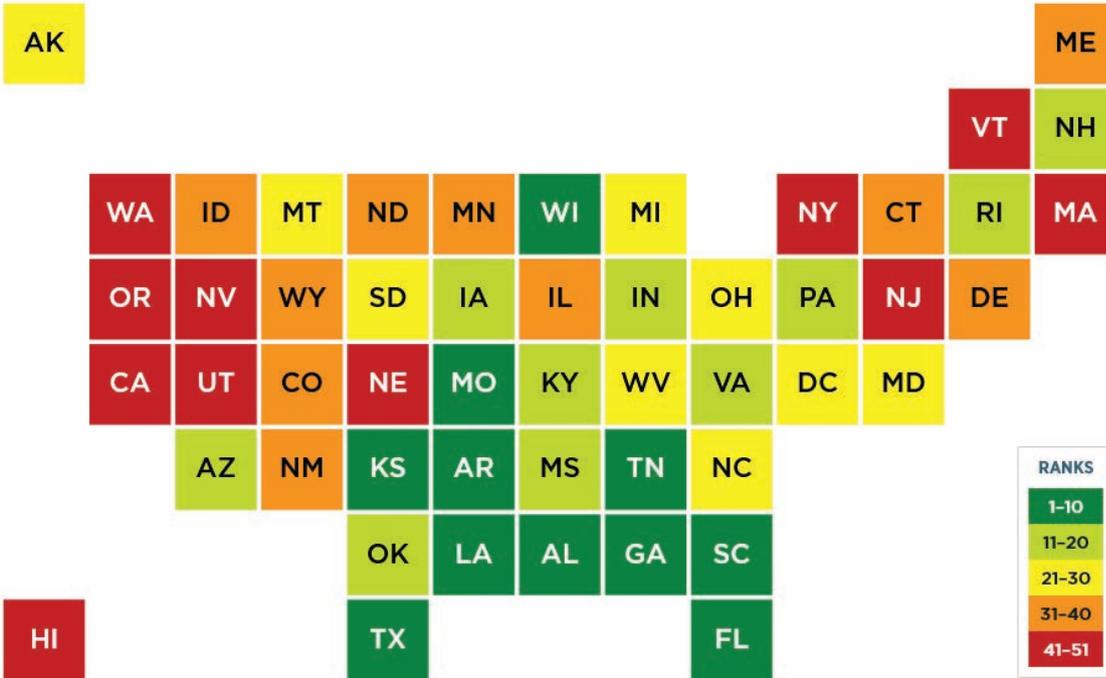
FREE: Sign up for our daily Hard Hat email newsletter at DailyReporter.com
 To advertise in The Daily Reporter, call 414-225-1844

THE DAILY REPORTER

STATUS UPDATE

WISCONSIN ELECTION INTEGRITY

By Lane Ruhland –
Attorney, Ruhland Law & Strategy, LLC



The conservative think tank Heritage Foundation published the Election Integrity Scorecard, which compares the election laws and regulations of each state. Wisconsin is tied for 8th most fair and secure, above Minnesota (34), Iowa (11), Illinois (39), and Michigan (28).

The 2020 presidential election has left many reeling and hesitant to participate in another election. Most troubling, following the election and the swirl of allegations of election fraud – some more far-fetched than others – more than 70% of Republicans and 26% of Independents indicated a lack a confidence that “the votes for president were accurately cast and counted in last year’s election.” Importantly, having concerns about election integrity does not necessarily mean you believe that servers were hacked from somewhere in Italy, switching votes from Trump to Biden. There are very legitimate and proven election integrity concerns that deserve attention, many of which have been issues for decades. If nothing else, election integrity is finally getting the spotlight it deserves.

A successful election administration scheme has strict election integrity measures, while at the same time, not unduly burdening voters exercising their franchise. Wisconsin’s election administration scheme, due to painstaking work under the leadership of then-Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch, including the passage of Voter ID laws, does a decent job of striking that balance. The Heritage Foundation, an American conservative think tank, agrees. Based on a comprehensive election integrity report, the Heritage Foundation ranked Wisconsin as having the eighth most fair and secure election laws. Wisconsin received perfect scores in the areas of Voter ID implementation, access of election observers, vote counting practices, and restriction of automatic registration. Wisconsin is far ahead of many other states in ensuring election integrity. For example,

there are jurisdictions that have, or are considering allowing non-U.S. citizens to vote, not requiring ID to cast a ballot and allowing for automatic voter registration.

However, Wisconsin is not without its election administration issues that warrant further work.

The Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty (WILL), a non-profit, liberty-minded organization, recently completed a 136-page comprehensive election integrity review for the state of Wisconsin. The report led to the conclusion that “there was no evidence of widespread voter fraud. In all likelihood, more eligible voters cast legal ballots for Joe Biden than Donald Trump.” However, WILL also concluded that “[i]t is almost certain that in Wisconsin’s 2020 election the number of votes that did not comply with existing legal requirements exceeded Joe Biden’s margin of victory.” As the report

notes, this does not mean that Biden did not win the majority of legally cast votes, “but the questions of fraud and unlawful processes are related.”

WILL’s findings of potentially unlawful processes were supported by Wisconsin’s nonpartisan Legislative Audit Bureau. Included in these likely unlawful processes are the following:

Adoption of absentee ballot drop boxes

A number of municipalities, including Madison and Green Bay, set up ballot drop box sites where voters could drop off their absentee ballots. Normally, these ballots would have to be submitted directly to the

municipal clerk. Ballot drop box sites are not provided for under Wisconsin law and create an extraordinary ballot security risk. There was no regulation as to who submitted the ballots on behalf of the voter, even

though non-family or caretaker third-party submissions are prohibited by law. And because this process is not provided for in our law, there is no clear ballot security protocol, or chain of custody procedures tailored specifically for this type of voting. There were no measures in place to ensure that ballots weren’t being harvested by partisan political operatives, and it is unclear what security protocols were in place to transfer the ballots from the drop boxes to the clerk’s office.

Illegal guidance by county clerks to voters to designate themselves as “indefinitely confined”

More than 265,000 Wisconsin voters checked the “indefinitely confined” status box on their absentee ballot application based on illegal advice from certain county clerks. This designation is meant for those who are, due to age or illness, indefinitely confined in their home or another facility. These voters are not required to provide ID to clerks to obtain an absentee ballot. By checking this box for the 2020 elections, these voters did not have to provide identification to receive an absentee ballot

and will continue to receive absentee ballots without future requests or a showing of ID. On behalf of the Republican Party of Wisconsin, I worked with a team of lawyers to sue the clerks who gave the unlawful guidance and we won; however, by then the ballots were cast and a court is always hesitant to overturn election results.

This does not mean all 265,000 ballots were illegally cast, but does, at the very least, demand election administrators conduct an audit to ensure that only those voters who correctly identified as “indefinitely confined” are on the indefinitely confined voters list.

Municipalities accepted grant funding from private groups

Overwhelmingly, municipalities which vote heavily toward Democrats, received more than \$10 million in private grant funding from the Center for Technical and Civic Life (CTCL), a non-profit funded by Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg. These funds are colloquially known as “Zuckerbucks.” Results of public records requests found that this organization worked very closely with municipal clerks and had access to voting materials and information in a way the average public does not. WILL found “significant increases in turnout for Democrats, approximately 8,000 voters statewide, as a result of the distribution of CTCL grants.” There were no statistically significant turnout increases for Republicans in those areas.

To address these major concerns, legislative Republicans put forth legislation aimed at safeguarding election integrity and preventing these types of issues from happening again. The proposals included the following:

- Prohibiting private funds from going to hand-picked communities to disproportionately impact voting and influence elections
- Outlawing ballot harvesting by political operatives
- Closing the indefinitely confined voter ID “loophole”
- Preventing unlawful “curing” or correcting of missing information on absentee ballots by election officials
- Protecting vulnerable voters by setting uniform standards for voting in long-term care facilities
- Ensuring access of election observers; and
- Creating more uniformity around absentee voting

Although these measures passed the legislature, Gov. Tony Evers vetoed the bills. That does not mean these measures will never be implemented. Candidates for office in 2022 have signaled that election integrity is a critical part of their platform. In fact, former lieutenant governor and current gubernatorial candidate Rebecca Kleefisch has signaled that she would sign election integrity reforms, if elected.

In addition to legislative reforms, voters are also taking it upon themselves to become more involved in the actual process. Every election, volunteers from across the state sign up to observe their polling places. Often these observers are frustrated because they are unable to hear or see the voting process. Since the 2020 presidential election, there has been a significant push to encourage volunteers to serve as paid election inspectors (poll workers) instead of observers. Inspectors are responsible for checking ID, handling election materials, processing absentee ballots and recording any anomalies during the course of election day.

In Wisconsin, local political parties can submit a list of names of party members seeking to serve as election inspectors to the municipal clerk. Wisconsin law requires clerks to select election inspectors from those lists to ensure bipartisan representation at the polling place. The Republican Party of Wisconsin recently announced that Republicans submitted close to 5,000 election inspectors for consideration. This number of poll worker nominations submitted is record setting.

Notwithstanding the election integrity issues that warrant further consideration by policymakers, if you are upset by the election results, you must be forward-looking, even if you maintain concerns about the past. Advocate for changes where you can and most importantly, VOTE. It is unproductive to refuse to participate in our electoral system, especially while critical elections continue to take place. If you see a need for election integrity reform, then you need to make sure that your champions are elected in the first place.

The upcoming elections – local, statewide and federal – are critical for setting the course for our state and nation. ABC members need to make their voices heard by casting their vote at every election, no matter how small, because sitting this one out is not an option. 

WISCONSIN IS FAR AHEAD OF MANY OTHER STATES IN ENSURING ELECTION INTEGRITY.

SOME THINGS CHANGE. SOME THINGS DON'T.

THE MERIT IN SOLAR



2000



2021

By Jim Boullion –
Director of Government Affairs, RENEW Wisconsin
and ABC of Wisconsin Alum

How did a practical, conservative, business-oriented person like me end up working for the renewable energy industry in Wisconsin?

Before I joined RENEW Wisconsin in 2018, I worked in government affairs for more than 30 years, most of them representing the construction industry. From 1992 to 2000, I represented ABC of Wisconsin. Those were challenging times for ABC members. The world was just starting to come out of a recession and Wisconsin still had a strong state prevailing wage law that had existed since the 1930s. The rules that the state used to determine the prevailing wage rates all but assured that union wage rates prevailed for most state and local construction projects, not the free-market wage rates.

During my years with ABC, the hope of changing those long-established prevailing wage laws was very low. Fast forward 20 years to 2015, and the political tide turned and the Legislature decided that the free market and competitive bidding was a better system than a state-regulated system and changed the law.

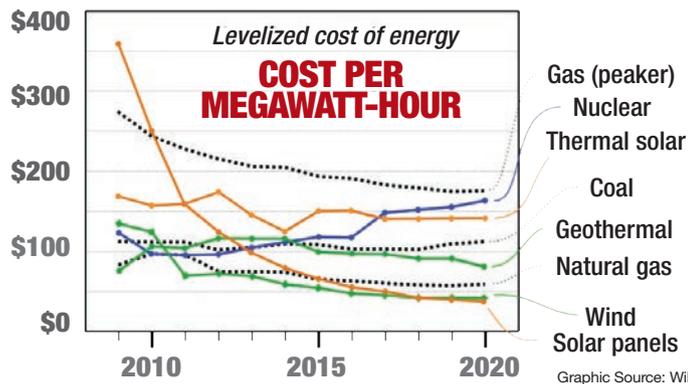
In a similar fashion, since the electric utility industry was first regulated in Wisconsin in 1907, there has been strict state control over who could generate and sell electricity and what the utilities could charge. When this utility monopoly law was written, the most practical and economical way to generate electricity was to build a few large central power plants and use imported coal and some natural gas from other states to generate power.

Even when I was working for ABC in the 1990s, renewable energy was still in its infancy and was cost prohibitive. The price of solar panels was over \$6.00 a watt and the cost of a Megawatt (MW) of solar energy

was over \$400. The primary reason anyone would install solar panels was for the environmental benefits, not the economics. The state-regulated electric utility system that had been in place for 90 years was still far less expensive and working relatively well.

one to economically generate his/her own electricity just about anywhere in the state.

Surprisingly, it turned out that my background in the construction industry was also a perfect fit for the renewable energy industry because it is a segment of



Fast forward 30 years to today and renewable energy is now the least cost source of energy. The cost of a solar panel has dropped to between \$.70 and \$1.50 per watt, and according to industry analyst Lazard, the levelized (unsubsidized) cost of utility scale solar is now in the range of \$30 to \$41 per MW and wind energy prices range from \$26 to \$50 per MW. At the same time, coal generated electricity has been averaging around \$100 per MW. While still important, centrally generated electricity from the utility company is no longer the only economically viable option for generating our electricity.

When I researched taking the job at RENEW Wisconsin, I had not realized how much the energy business had changed. That impressive price drop and growth in the industry was reaching a tipping point. Renewable energy was no longer just an environmentally-friendly technology, it was an emerging industry that would allow any-

the construction industry. Think about it. Instead of building just a few large power plants, then sending billions of dollars off to other states for the next 60 years to pay for the coal and natural gas needed to run them, we can take the money we would be spending on fuel and instead spend it with local construction companies and local construction workers to build a lot of smaller renewable energy generation facilities right here in Wisconsin.

Most of the growth in Wisconsin's solar industry over the last 10 years has come from small, merit shop companies who started working on homes, then expanded with the potential for even larger projects in the future to meet a growing demand for inexpensive, clean reliable energy.

In the coming 10 to 20 years there is also going to be a boom in large utility scale solar and wind projects, backed up by a fast-growing battery storage industry that is also seeing massive drops in prices. Large and

small renewable energy projects combined, that is a lot of potential work for a lot of construction companies and construction workers!

So now that the economics make sense and the free market is developing cost-effective ways for people and businesses to invest in their own energy production, the only thing holding us back and causing us to fall behind the rest of the country in this area is ourselves.

The utility regulatory model that was created in Wisconsin 114 years ago has changed very little to adapt to these new facts on the ground. While some people would like to completely change the utility laws, RENEW Wisconsin believes that they only need to be updated and clarified a small amount to allow for significant growth in renewable energy and its many related opportunities.

One such piece of legislation that is currently under consideration at the state Capitol would allow the use of free markets, competition and innovation to expand the options we have to invest our energy dollars and, at the same time, help to create thousands of new construction jobs in Wisconsin.

The bill is Senate Bill 490 /Assembly Bill 527, which would allow private developers

to build mid-sized, up to 5 MW in size, local community solar projects that allow local people, businesses, churches, schools or local governments to become subscribers to a portion of the energy output of that system. Community solar would expand customer choice, save money on energy bills and keep energy dollars in Wisconsin, all while creating healthier and more resilient communities.

The bill was introduced by state Sen. Duey Stroebel (R-Saukville) and Rep. Tim Ramthun (R-Campbellsport). It was written in a way that free market conservatives can support. Unlike legislation in years past that were designed to support renewable energy only for the environmental benefits, this bill has no mandates and there are no subsidies. In fact, the legislation specifically states that no additional state subsidies can be accepted by community solar developers.

The bill has further safe guards to ensure that community solar projects are built only where they have community support by requiring that the local governing body must approve the project with a two-thirds super-majority vote.

Finally, to ensure that the legislation achieves its goals, there is a 10-year automatic sunset of the law. If community solar projects are not performing in the market-

place or not meeting the needs of the state, the authorization to build these kinds of projects comes to an end. If the law is successful, the Legislature and governor would have to pass another bill to reauthorize it.

Whether it is in the construction industry, computers, health care or energy, time has an amazing way of changing things. What you knew to be true 20, 10 or even five years ago, may no longer be true today. New technology, mass production, better efficiency and today's fuel costs have all contributed to drive down the price of renewable energy so that it is now a cost-competitive option that everyone, not just the utilities, can economically invest in to generate energy. It is an industry we can help grow by passing legislation that reduces some red tape so the marketplace can work.

As I said, I still consider myself a practical, conservative, business-oriented person, and in the 30 years since I worked for ABC of Wisconsin, I didn't have to change the way I think or what I believe to work in the renewable energy industry. But thank goodness I did change my oversized glasses and Ned Flanders mustache! 

For more information on RENEW Wisconsin or renewable energy feel free to contact me at jim@renewwisconsin.org.

It shouldn't take a four-foot diameter oak tree in your kitchen to find out who you can trust.



To find out more about the Silver Lining and a special discount on home and auto insurance just for members of the **ABC of Wisconsin**, contact an official supplier of the Silver Lining.

For the name of an agency near you, visit thesilverlining.com.



POLITICS IS LOCAL

(BUT IT TAKES A VILLAGE TO GET THINGS DONE)

By Josh Schoemann – Washington County Executive

You've probably heard the old saying, "All politics is local." It may be one of the most overused and misused clichés in politics, right up there with the policy equivalent of the importance of "local control." Of course, the reason these phrases become cliché is because there is a thread of truth in them, and they pull at the heartstrings of American sentiment. As our state and federal government get bigger and bigger and their reach gets wider and wider, our sense of control seems to be evaporating before us. Whether through blatant tools of heavy-handed mandates, or the more subdued drug of "free money," there is plenty to bemoan.

Before throwing your hands up and

retreating to the insular safety of blissful ignorance, I implore you to consider the impact you can have if you fret less about the gridlock and dysfunction in Madison and Washington, and instead focus on the outsized impact you can have on your neighbors by focusing on your local community. To consider this alternative, please indulge me in a few illustrative examples from my own community that might serve as inspiration.

When you think about Washington County, probably the very last thing that would come to mind is homelessness. We are one of the wealthiest counties in Wisconsin per capita, the 10th largest by population, the most conservative by voting percentage, and have been rated the highest quality of

life in Wisconsin. Suffice it to say, we are certainly blessed and have quite a bit going in our favor. In addition to all these abundant blessings, however, we are an imperfect people with life challenges of every shape, size and variety, including homelessness.

Back in 2016, these facts hit home for a number of us. Thanks to a coalition of civic groups, as well as tireless advocacy from a virtuous

***THIS WAS
A TRUE
EXAMPLE
OF
NEIGHBOR
HELPING
NEIGHBOR.***



Area elected officials and ABC members joined Washington County Executive Josh Schoemann (far left) in proclaiming Jan. 31, 2020 as Apprenticeship Day. Also in the photo are then-state Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald; state Rep. Barb Dittrich; Jessie Cannizzaro, Milestone Plumbing; Kelly Tourdot, ABC of Wisconsin; Don Kriefall, Washington County Board chair; state Rep. Rick Gundrum; and Mike Schwab, Circle Electric. Front row are state Rep. Janel Brantjen and state Rep. Dan Knodl.

neighbor named Karl Glunz, our community's eyes were open. This wasn't a big city problem; it was our problem and our neighbors needed help.

After the revelation of this challenge, a coalition of business and philanthropic givers urgently worked toward building and sustainably funding the early operation of a facility to help some of our most vulnerable neighbors in their most acute time of need. This courageous group rallied the community, engaged local government leaders and, in just a couple years, built a beautiful, new facility that can serve the homeless single men and women of our county.

This wasn't a government-led solution. In fact, the only government involvement was the county donation of a few acres to build upon and the city providing zoning and permit approvals. Instead, this was a true example of neighbor helping neighbor. It was local non-profits that raised the issue and proposed the solution. It was local businesses and philanthropists that provided the equity. It was local contractors that provided the construction at a much discounted price, and it was government simply getting out of the way to allow it to happen. The end result is a hand up to friends and neighbors who hit a rough patch in their life, helping them to get back on their feet, and providing services to get them to a place to be able to give back to their families and their communities in their own ways. It's not a comprehensive government program, but rather, it's love your neighbor and it's how our great community lives and works together every day.

Although we may not consciously think about it, I think what is scary for most of us is that the generations who established the businesses, the non-profits, the churches, the volunteer fire companies and the trusting networks to make stories like that possible are leaving the workforce and the world. We are in a time when the "Greatest Generation" is slowly passing away and where the "Baby Boomers" are leaving the workforce in waves. As this transition occurs, the demographics tell us that there are fewer of us left to fill those jobs, those non-profit board seats and the giant shoes of generosity and social capital.

It is the challenge and opportunity of a lifetime that lie ahead of us, the next generation, to take the torch of liberty and pass it to the generations to come through the fruits of association and the connections among individuals. There is another overused and misused cliché that touches on this sentiment, "It takes a village to raise

*YOU SEE, IT'S A
VIRTUOUS
CYCLE OF
PROSPERITY
AND IT ISN'T
THE GOVERNMENT
THAT CREATES IT;
PEOPLE DO.*

a child." And like the others, there is truth in the phrase. It is just that "a village" is not the local government, the public school and certainly not the state or the feds. As illustrated with Karl's Place (the name given to the singles homeless shelter in honor of the virtuous character referenced above), "a village" is more accurately "a community" of people serving people, living the ethos of "love your neighbor."

In Washington County we are undertaking an initiative to strengthen the ties that bind to raise a child and to love our neighbor, and we call it "Our Great Community." It is an effort supported by county government, but not of county government. It is a coalition of people from manufacturing, philanthropy, construction, local government, public schools, real estate, banking and more. Our goals include: creating the opportunity for the "next generation housing" so our kids and their friends can more easily access the housing market, because we believe the promise and safety of home ownership are signs of people investing in themselves and our community; creating opportunities between students and local employers in partnership with

our schools, because the promise of a quality job are signs of corporate neighbors investing in people and community; and, creating opportunities for people to build and strengthen trusting networks and social capital by participating in local civic groups, churches and non-profits, because we believe such participation will benefit the people themselves and our community.

You see, it's a virtuous cycle of prosperity and it isn't the government that creates it; people do. It takes the community raising the child of good character, who seeks a job with a good corporate neighbor, who helps provide the wealth to "secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity," providing for the opportunity to give back, starting the entire cycle all over again.

If you spend any amount of time engaging on social media or watching the nightly news, it is easy to get disheartened and even upset. Rest assured, it has never been the politicians or the government that have solved our problems and it will not be with the next generation either. Instead, as it has always been and as Robert Putnam described, will be the "connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them." So, the old saying is true, "all politics is local," but it is the community of people, not the government – even local government – that makes the difference. If every level of government simply creates the environment for this virtuous cycle of prosperity, and then gets out of the way, our community, our state and our nation still have our brightest days to come.

So, avoid the temptation to retract to the safety of blissful ignorance. As Benjamin Franklin said, "Only a virtuous people are capable of freedom. As nations become corrupt and vicious, they have more need of masters." If we have learned anything in the past two years, there are plenty of government officials at all levels ready and willing to be those masters. Be the single point of light that breaks through the darkness of corruption and viciousness; the virtuous character who builds community through love for one neighbor at a time. It will have compounding effects too great to measure and will proliferate freedom for posterity. 

Q&A

OUR TWO STEVES SEPARATED BY 30 YEARS

ABC of Wisconsin has only had two individuals serve in the top membership role (president/chair) at ABC National. Steve Westra served as president in 1992. Steve Klessig served as chair in 2021. We asked each of them to share some perspectives as a “compare and contrast” of the times.

STEVE WESTRA



Where did you grow up, and how did you end up in construction?

I grew up in Waupun. My grandfather and father (Dewey, charter ABC member) were in

construction. Our home was the company office. Dad did the estimating and handled any administration. The crew came to the house every workday for their marching orders. So, I grew up immersed in the business. Dad would not let me work in the field until when I was almost 14 until a small mason contractor asked if he could hire me for the summer. The next day, I was working in the field! After that, it was summers and school vacations until I left for the U.S. Army. When I came home, I worked in the field for six months, and then in the fall, I restarted college. Dad offered me a part time job in the office. The rest is history.

There are several great organizations out there, which would have appreciated your volunteer time and effort. What drew you to ABC?

Dad taught us, and personally modeled, support of family, church and related ministries, community and industry. So, it was natural for me to be involved in nonprofits in each of those areas from early adulthood on. I still enjoy volunteering today. Dad was active in the very first years of ABC and his enthusiasm for ABC's mission and vision was contagious. Besides taking advantage of the few educational opportunities first available, I was asked to serve on the state convention committee.

How did you end up serving as National ABC Chair?

I was asked to serve as secretary to the Chapter board right after my initial election in 1986. I said I would do it for one year. As having done so for other nonprofits, I found that taking comprehensive minutes often took me out of the meat of the discussion. A national board member, almost as an aside, said, “We think you might make a good President (referred to as Chair today) one day.” I told him that was a possibility but that I was not signing up for the typical six-year term common at the time (three as a board member, one as President elect, one as President and one as Past President.) He asked, “Why not?” I told him Kathy (my wife) and I agreed to three years, and we had a young family. He said, “Oh, OK,” and walked away. The next year I served as President elect and as President in 1988.

Our chapter sent the President elect, President, and past President to serve as National Board members. I believe National split into regions in 1988. Our regional Vice President was John Chapin. He encouraged me to run for Regional Vice President and then again for Na-

tional President. I said, “No,” several times, but John kept calling. So, I finally discussed it with Dad and my partners at work. They approved. Then I went to Kathy and the kids. I was sure they would say no after I told them how we might become targets of the union as a family. I was surprised when they also blessed this effort!

What was the biggest challenge and the biggest surprise you faced as National Chair?

The biggest surprise was to find out early in my year (as president) that ABC was in serious financial trouble. Dealing with this was also the biggest challenge.

Another challenge was dealing with the politics in ABC from chapter to chapter (for instance, the board members from a southern state made and seconded a motion to support Ross Perot in the 1992 Presidential election).

Another challenge was dealing with the politics inside ABC. There was more than I expected in the National staff and a great deal between National and the chapters; way more than there should have been.

Another was getting the National Board to approve dues increases! Some things never change.

What is your proudest achievement or contribution during your time as National Board Chair?

The biggest accomplishment for me personally was helping to create the National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) out of the Construction Education Foundation (CEF) and shepherding this through the National Board and the multiple year fundraising effort. It finally put open shop education on its feet in a stand-alone capacity. In my humble opinion, the National Board would not ever have raised the money to create curriculum and keep it up to date through dues or only fundraising inside our membership.

A close second to that was putting a plan in place that put ABC back on track financially.



Steve Westra, former ABC National president (now referred to as chair), meets President George H.W. Bush.

Former ABC National Chair Steve Klessig presides at the ABC National Leadership Institute in 2021.



How did the position change you?

I am not sure but would suggest three things. One, it helped me take a much longer view in my other business and nonprofit endeavors. Two, having seen how the sausage was really made in Congress up close and personal, it eliminated any and all ideas I had about seeking public office later in life! Three, after spending as much time in D.C. and dealing with the outrageous expense (if I recall correctly, our National staffers were paying \$13.00 per day to park near the office in 1992!) and incredible traffic, I really came to appreciate life in our state, especially the rural areas!

What inspires you now? Has that changed over the years?

People, businesses and nonprofits that work to meet their mission and vision with integrity while trying to continue to improve their effectiveness.

What are the biggest changes you have seen in the construction industry since you began in it?

Technology. Costs. Tighter and tighter codes and regulations. Tighter construction schedules.

What would your advice be to the next ABC of Wisconsin member who serves as National Board Chair?

Be who you are no matter what. Stand your ground. Let your integrity shine at all times.

STEVE KLESSIG



Where did you grow up, and how did you end up in construction?

I grew up on a dairy farm in Northeast Wisconsin. I started my career in architecture working

for an architectural firm in Kaukauna. Keller, Inc. recognized my work and offered me to start the design side of Keller.

There are several great organizations out there, which would have appreciated your volunteer time and effort. What drew you to ABC?

The mission! The values! What other na-

tional organizations embodies the principles that America was formed around better than ABC? Who fights for the rights of the common man better than ABC? Who protects the principles of merit and free enterprise better than ABC? And we do all of it while giving God all the glory.

How did you end up serving as National ABC Chair?

It was a long road. My journey started in 1988 when then-president of Keller, Tom Berghuis, asked me to get involved with ABC of Wisconsin. I started in Government Affairs, then got on the Board of Directors and then was elected Chair in 2014. After leading the chapter, I thought I could lead the Midwest Region and later the National association.

What was the biggest challenge and the biggest surprise you faced as National Chair?

My biggest challenge was doing my full-time job as well as leading a very complicated, multifaceted organization like ABC. My biggest surprise was the time commitment necessary to do a good job.

What is your proudest achievement or contribution during your time as National Board Chair? How did the position change you?

My achievement or failures will be for others and history to judge. The thing we worked on were inclusion in our workforce, improving our training of apprentices, continuity and collaborating between the National association and its chapters, beating back the PRO Act, fighting government

mandates in every form, but most of all, adding member value.

The position changed me into believing in America more.

What inspires you now? Has that changed over the years?

Service in any form inspires me. I am entering a time in my life where I can look back and grab someone else's hand and help them forward. Yes, that has changed from climbing the ladder to building more ladders for more people.

What are the biggest changes you have seen in the construction industry since you began in it?

Technology has to be at the top of the list. It is hard to tell the difference between our drawing and the real thing. Governmental regulation is increasing at such a rapid rate that I worry if building will be affordable for small businesses.

What would your advice be to the next ABC of Wisconsin member who serves as National Board Chair?

Be optimistic, and don't bet against America. Lead ABC in new directions but never forget the foundation of ABC – MERIT. Protect the values of the association passionately. Help members, old and new discover the principles and the value in ABC membership.

Now that your time as Board chair is up, what's next for you?

Work! I love to work. I love this industry more than any hobby. The only thing I love more than work is my God and family. I plan to invest in those two things as well. 

NEW MEMBERS

For membership information contact **Bill Stranberg, Membership Director**
Associated Builders and Contractors of Wisconsin – 608-244-5883

NOVEMBER 2021

• CLG Electric, LLC

Collin Garvalia

E2095 Golde Lane

Genoa, WI 54632

Phone: 608-689-2020

Description: Contractor Member

Sponsor: Brian Wieser, Wieser Brothers

General Contractor

Beam Club Members-to-date: 53.5

• E2 Innovations, LLC

Ervin Fischer

422 W. Bent Ave.

Oshkosh, WI 54901

Phone: 920-573-1462

Description: Contractor Member

Sponsor: Troy Carlson, Ansay & Associates, LLC

Beam Club Members-to-date: 25

• Electric Tech, LLC

Joe Lewandowski

11019 N. Crestline Road

Mequon, WI 53092

Phone: 262-240-4830

Description: Contractor Member

Sponsor: Jessica Cannizzaro, Milestone Plumbing Inc.

Beam Club Members-to-date: 4

• Lumber Specialties

Dennis Westhoff

P.O. Box 38

Dyersville, IA 52040

Phone: 563-875-2858

Description: Supplier Member

Sponsor: Russ Tabaka, Gilbank Construction, Inc.

Beam Club Members-to-date: 4.5

• ON Electric

Randy Lange

E12808 West Point Drive

Merrimac, WI 53561

Phone: 608-553-1007

Description: Contractor Member

Sponsor: Dan Bertler, Supreme Structures, Inc.

Beam Club Members-to-date: 52

• R.H. Batterman & Co., Inc.

Frank McKearn

2857 S. Bartells Drive

Beloit, WI 53511

Phone: 608-365-4464

Description: Associate Member

Sponsor: Kevin Day, Corporate Contractors Inc. (CCI)

Beam Club Members-to-date: 17

• Staples & Associates, Inc.

Nate Baer

N28W23050 Roundy Drive, Ste 100

Pewaukee, WI 53072

Phone: 262-522-8900

Description: Contractor Member

Sponsor: Jessica Cannizzaro, Milestone Plumbing Inc.

Beam Club Members-to-date: 5

• Superior Skilled Trades

Mike Selvaggi

3 S. Lakewood Court

South Elgin, IL 60177

Phone: 630-205-6187

Description: Associate Member

Sponsor: Eric Messer, The Starr Group

Beam Club Members-to-date: 4

DECEMBER 2021

• Broadway Construction, LLC

Nikki Platt

1932 E. Park Place

Milwaukee, WI 53211

Phone: 414-640-6996

Description: Contractor Member

Sponsor: Jay Zahn, Hausmann Group

Beam Club Members-to-date: 54

• Grady, Hayes & Neary, LLC

Todd Jex

N14 W23777 Stone Ridge Drive, Ste. 200

Waukesha, WI 53188

Phone: 262-347-2001

Description: Associate Member

Sponsor: Casey Malesevich, Sure-Fire, Inc.

Beam Club Members-to-date: 8

• Independent Flooring Contractors, Inc.

Marcus Torgeson

2506 S. Hasting Way

Eau Claire, WI 54701

Phone: 715-833-2432

Description: Contractor Member

Sponsor: Jim Bunkelman, Royal Construction, Inc.

Beam Club Members-to-date: 10

• J. J. Keller & Associates, Inc.

Susan Baranczyk

P.O. Box 368

Neenah, WI 54957

Phone: 877-564-2333

Description: Supplier Member

Sponsor: Steve Klessig, Keller, Inc.

Beam Club Members-to-date: 62

• Sandler Training - Hoslet Consulting

Tony Hoslet

811 Packerland Drive

Green Bay, WI 54303

Phone: 920-931-5045

Description: Associate Member

Sponsor: Steve Klessig, Keller, Inc.

Beam Club Members-to-date: 63

• READY MIX CONCRETE

• MASONRY MORTARS

• BUILDING PRODUCTS FOR THE CONCRETE AND MASONRY CONTRACTOR

• AGGREGATES FOR THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY



LYCON INC. is a family owned supplier of ready mix concrete, masonry mortar and building materials serving Wisconsin. We are committed to providing quality products and services to our customers.



Concrete/Aggregate
800-955-7702 • 800-955-8758 • 866-575-1389
Mortar/Building Materials
877-599-5090

www.lyconinc.com

Built on Experience. Driven by Results.



WINNER

Best Bonding and Insurance Firm
R&R Insurance Services



Brad Stehno, M.S.

Dan Maurer, AU-M

Dan Scheider, CIC, CPIA, CRIS

Thomas Scheider, CPCU, CLU, CRIS

CONSTRUCTION & BONDING
DIVISION

[MyKnowledgeBroker.com/Construction](https://www.MyKnowledgeBroker.com/Construction)



Wisconsin

SuperCon'22



Glacier
Canyon
Conference
Center
Wisconsin Dells

FEBRUARY
9-10

BACK IN PERSON
BIGGER
THAN EVER!



Featuring more than 72 hour-long sessions!

REGISTER ONLINE: abcwi.org/supercon