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SPRING 2017

WISCONSIN INTEREST

A Deadly Grip

Opioid scourge
threatens
Wisconsin's
health and welfare

BY IKE BRANNON & DEVORAH GOLDMAN

Rural areas
are hit hard

BY MIKE NICHOLS & JAN UEBELHERR

Slow descent
into darkness

BY JAN UEBELHERR



What 'classical liberal'
really means

BY NIGEL ASHFORD

Forestland program
shifts tax burden

BY BRIAN REISINGER

Rural resentment
laid bare

BY SUNNY SCHUBERT



Editor > CHARLES J. SYKES

WI

WISCONSIN INTEREST

Spend some time digesting this issue

In this note, I usually try to highlight the most important stories in this magazine. But this time, my message is simpler: Read it. The whole thing.

From our cover story on the “American carnage” of the opioid epidemic to Nigel Ashford’s useful guide to “classical liberalism,” this issue of *Wisconsin Interest* is a remarkable collection of outstanding journalism and thoughtful conservative commentary. As such, it’s proof that both are still possible in the Age of Trump.

Dan Benson dismantles the claim that Milwaukee isn’t getting its fair share of state aid, Brian Reisinger analyzes the tax shift underlying Wisconsin’s Managed Forest Law program, and Mike Nichols and Jan Uebelherr continue to expose how Wisconsin’s arcane occupational licensing requirements block economic opportunity.

In our Frontlines profile, Sunny Schubert talks with University of Wisconsin-Madison professor Kathy Cramer, whose groundbreaking research into the disaffection of rural voters has done so much to explain last year’s election. Richard Esenberg discusses the challenges facing conservatives in the wake of the 2016 election results.

But, by all means, make sure you spend some time with our portrait of the opioid crisis — how it came about and the human cost of this rolling disaster here in Wisconsin. Fortunately, Gov. Scott Walker and the Legislature are addressing the crisis. But as Ike Brannon and Deborah Goldman report, the number of Wisconsinites who die every year from a drug overdose now “exceeds the number who die from motor vehicle crashes, suicide, breast cancer, colon cancer, firearms, influenza or HIV.”

WPRI

The Wisconsin Policy Research Institute Inc., established in 1987, is a nonpartisan, not-for-profit institute working to engage and energize Wisconsinites and others in discussions and timely action on key public policy issues critical to the state’s future, growth and prosperity. The institute’s research and public education activities are directed to identify and promote public policies in Wisconsin that are fair, accountable and cost-effective.

Through original research and analysis and public opinion polling, the institute’s work focuses on such issue arenas as state and local government tax policy and spending, including related program accountability, consequences and effectiveness. It also focuses on health care policy and service delivery; education; transportation and economic development; welfare and social services; and other issues that have or could have a significant impact on the quality of life and future of the state.

The institute is guided by the belief that competitive free markets, limited government, private initiative and personal responsibility are essential to our democratic way of life.

To find more information about the Wisconsin Policy Research Institute, locate any article in this publication, ask questions and/or make comments, please go to www.wpri.org.

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TOM LYNN PHOTO

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It's not politics as usual anymore

A stunning election last fall gave way to a tumultuous transition and a raucous, dysfunctional, but never dull first 100 days of the Trump presidency. Much of the Obama legacy was quickly dismantled via executive orders, but the GOP struggled to move its legislative agenda, and the country seems as politically divided as ever.

How divided are we?

Increasingly, Americans have constructed what The Associated Press called “intellectual ghettos,” where audiences seldom intersect. “What’s big news in one world is ignored in another. Conspiracy theories sprout, anger abounds and the truth becomes ever more elusive,” wrote reporter David Bauder. While conservatives can take their world view from Laura Ingraham, Rush Limbaugh or a host of other conservative outlets, progressives can dive into their own thought ghetto by immersing themselves in a world bounded by the Huffington Post, Daily Kos, Talking Points Memo and Salon.



The silos are discrete universes that seldom talk to one another or seek to persuade or engage those of other viewpoints.

But this divide is increasingly geographical as

well. In 1976, only about 26 percent of the population lived in what author Bill Bishop calls “landslide counties,” where the margin of victory was more than 20 percentage points. That proportion has grown steadily as the nation’s political polarization accelerated. By 2004, it had risen to 48.3 percent; by 2012, a majority of Americans (50.6 percent) lived in a landslide county. And last year, the proportion of Americans living in deeply blue or deeply red counties surged to 60.4 percent.

“That’s a big number,” Bishop notes. “Even bigger, however, is the percentage of rural voters who lived in a landslide county. In this election, more than three out of every four rural voters lived in one of these politically lopsided communities.”

The result, Bishop adds: “Any common ground between



the two sides has nearly disappeared.”

That pattern has increasingly played out in Wisconsin. During last November’s presidential election, Donald Trump won Wisconsin by a single percentage point, but he won 35 of the state’s 72 counties by more than 20 points. Hillary Clinton won three counties, including the state’s two most populous ones (71.4 percent in Dane County, 66.4 percent in Milwaukee County), by more than 20 points.

The urban-rural divide was especially sharp: Trump won the state’s rural vote by a staggering 27 points. (See related story on Page 27.)

Cheesehead clout

The year began with Wisconsinites playing central roles in the extraordinary Game of Thrones unfolding in Washington, D.C. At the White House, Reince Priebus became chief of staff; on Capitol Hill, Paul Ryan remained House speaker. Both of them got off to rocky starts, but the year is still young.

Big win on energy

One unalloyed victory for the Badger State came when the Trump administration began rolling back Obama-era energy regulations, including the Clean Power Plan. A 2015 analysis by the state’s Public Service Commission found that “this single federal regulation will cost Wisconsin rate-payers between \$3.3 billion and \$13.4 billion.” Last year, the U.S. Supreme Court put the regulation on hold after two dozen states, including Wisconsin, sued the Environmental Protection Agency.

“Since Wisconsin is more reliant on coal than most states, this bureaucratic boondoggle would have cost our state dearly in job losses, rate hikes and lost economic potential,” Brett



Healy, president of the MacIver Institute, said in a statement. In 2015, a MacIver Institute and Beacon Hill study found that the Clean Power Plan could cost Wisconsin 21,000 jobs and \$1.82 billion in disposable income by 2030.

Update on campus free speech

John McAdams, a professor of political science at Marquette University, won the annual Jeane Jordan Kirkpatrick Award for Academic Freedom in February. But McAdams, who was suspended for writing a controversial blog post in 2014, is still barred from teaching at Marquette.



We continue to be intrigued by Marquette's intellectual standards. Earlier this year, the Jesuit school announced: "Marquette is honored to host the brilliant political activist Angela Davis."

McAdams commented on Marquette's double standards:

"At the event and tweeting about it notes that President Lovell called Davis an 'awesome example.' This about a woman who is a self-proclaimed Communist and who bought guns for her fellow black militants in a plot that led to the killing of several innocent people."

He also noted the disparity between the school's handling of Davis and conservative speaker Ben Shapiro.

"When Ben Shapiro was at Marquette, the university required the reading of a disclaimer that noted that Shapiro's views were not necessarily the views of Marquette University."

"No such disclaimer was read at the Davis event ..."

"Note the double standard: When Ben Shapiro, a rather mainstream conservative, spoke on campus, Marquette officials threatened to charge the Young Americans for Freedom (who sponsored the event) for security."

"They backed off that, but then staffer Chrissy Nelson tried to undermine the event by advising leftists to sign up for a ticket and not show up, depriving an interested student of a seat. She did so at the suggestion of an unnamed 'director of diversity.'"

"Not only did no Marquette official laud Shapiro, Provost Dan Myers took to Marquette Wire to argue against Shapiro."

"While minor contributions to Shapiro's speaker's fee were made by Student Government and the Residence Hall Council, apparently all of Davis' fee was paid by Marquette. Out of tuition money."

A Milwaukee County circuit judge on May 4 backed Marquette's suspension of McAdams, who vowed to appeal the ruling.

Hard times for Democrats

Not that long ago, Democrats controlled pretty much everything in Wisconsin: the governorship, both houses of the Legislature, a majority of the congressional delegation and both U.S. Senate seats. Since 2010, they've suffered one defeat after another, including Trump's victory here, the first time a Republican won the state since 1984.

Today, the GOP holds not only the governorship, commanding legislative majorities and a majority of congressional seats, but last year retained a U.S. Senate seat when Ron Johnson defied the polls and upset liberal heartthrob Russ Feingold. If that were not bad enough, conservatives now also hold a solid 5-2 majority on the state Supreme Court.

Writing in the *Wall Street Journal* in March, Emily Jashinsky, a former WPRI intern, chronicled the Democrats' sorry state:

"The latest evidence of Democrats' sorry slide is (the election) for a seat on Wisconsin's Supreme Court. Only six years after their historic demonstrations against Act 10, Democrats couldn't find a single candidate willing to run against conservative Justice Annette Ziegler in her bid for another 10-year term."


Since 2000, campaigns for the high court have become increasingly high-profile, high-stakes contests. This year, the left simply folded. On April 4, Ziegler won a second term unopposed.



Jashinsky continued:

"A spokesman for the state's Democratic Party told the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel in January that 'a number of people' considered opposing Justice Ziegler before ultimately deciding not to take the plunge. Considering Wisconsin's political history as an incubator of 20th-century progressivism, this development is rather stunning. 'The Democratic Party has done a terrible job,' Glendale Mayor Bryan Kennedy told the Journal Sentinel. 'We haven't built the kind of infrastructure that says to a Supreme Court candidate, 'We can help you.'"

In politics, things change fast, but Democrats are also having a hard time recruiting a strong candidate to run against Gov. Scott Walker in 2018. Former state Sen. Tim Cullen toyed with idea but bowed out after admitting that he wasn't keen on trying to raise money.

This is what happens when your bench is decimated, demoralized and defeated. 

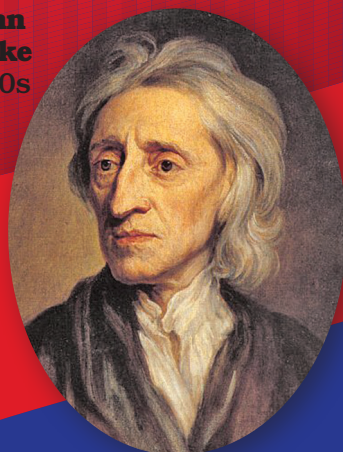
Wisconsin Interest editor Charles J. Sykes is founder of the Right Wisconsin website, an author, a political commentator and co-host of the public radio show Indivisible.



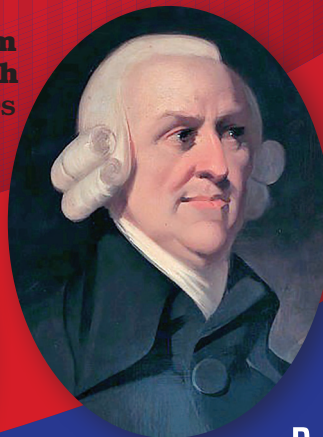
Nigel Ashford is Senior Program Officer at the Institute for Humane Studies at George Mason University in Fairfax, Va. He was a professor of political science at the University of Staffordshire, England, where he wrote extensively on American conservatism. He was also a Bradley Resident Scholar at the Heritage Foundation.

Being a 'Classical Liberal'

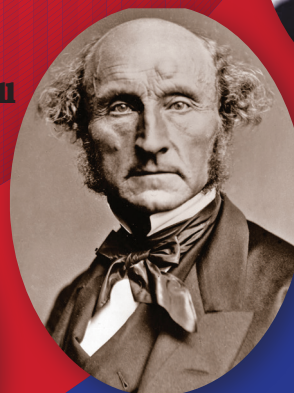
John Locke
1690s



Adam Smith
1770s



John Stuart Mill
1870s



Ludwig von Mises
1940s



By Nigel Ashford

When today's conservatives describe themselves as such, here's what they really mean

House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) was widely mocked after he described himself as a classical liberal in an address to College Republicans in Madison last October. Ryan was referring to his admiration for free-market economists such as the Austrian Ludwig von Mises, who described himself as a classical liberal in his book *Liberalism*.

When Nobel Prize-winning free-market economist Milton Friedman died in 2006, the American media called him the best-known conservative economist of his time. In the rest of the world, he was described as the best-known liberal economist. As this indicates, the terms "liberalism" and "conservatism," and the variations within them, are not universally understood.

Classical liberalism (sometimes called libertarianism) is a school of thought that places the freedom of the individual at its core. Key historical figures in this tradition are John Locke, Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill and, more recently, Friedrich Hayek and Friedman. Today, businessman and philanthropist Charles Koch says he considers himself a classical liberal.

What is classical liberalism?

Classical liberalism has 10 key principles:

- *Freedom is the most important political value. It is not the most important value. Each individual will choose for himself or herself what to value most. It may be family, religion, friends, work, etc. Freedom to choose is the necessary condition for people to pursue their own goals.*
- *The individual is more important than the collective. The collective exists to serve the individual, not vice versa.*
- *Classical liberals are skeptical about power because they believe it is usually exercised in the interests of the power-wielder.*
- *A free society requires the rule of law, that certain higher principles, such as equality before the law, should override legislative or executive decisions that betray those principles.*
- *Social problems are more effectively dealt with by civil society — such as the family, churches and charities — than by government.*
- *Order enables people to pursue their goals and is best achieved spontaneously, rather than commanded by government.*
- *Free markets are superior to government intervention in creating wealth, providing good employment and reducing poverty.*
- *People have very different values and beliefs, and can live together only with toleration, not by interfering in behavior of which one disapproves.*
- *Peace (the lack of violence) is a precondition for people to live their lives.*
- *Government should be strictly limited in its scope and size.*

Classical liberalism and conservatism

Classical liberalism has been identified as one element within modern conservatism in America. In his widely celebrated book, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945*, George Nash identified three strands of thought that united in conservatism against the growth of government: traditionalism, libertarianism and anti-communism. William F. Buckley and his *National Review* magazine represented this combination of conservatism, often labeled

“fusionism.”

Conservatism and classical liberalism had much in common. They both emphasized the importance of freedom. They opposed the growing encroachment of the state in all aspects of life. They viewed communism as the greatest threat to free societies.

However, there also were tensions between traditionalist conservatives and classical liberals, with the key difference being the balance between liberty and order. The two camps agree on the value of both but prioritize them differently.

They agree that order, defined as rules that enable the predictability of people’s behavior, is essential to a free society.

Classical liberals believe that order mostly can be left to the free decisions of individuals, which Hayek described as spontaneous order. Traditionalist conservatives, too, believe in spontaneous or organic order but think that government has to play a much bigger role.

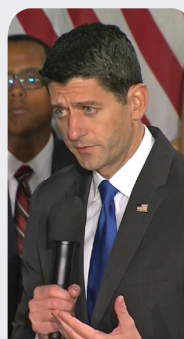
The root in the disagreement, I think, is whether one has a more positive or negative view of human nature. Classical liberals believe that good behavior largely arises from the

free interaction of individuals, while traditionalists believe that government has to actively promote virtue in the citizenry.

Hayek wrote a famous essay, “Why I Am Not a Conservative,” as an appendix to his book *The Constitution of Liberty*. He identified six key differences between conservatives and classical liberals:

- *Conservatives fear change, while classical liberals embrace it despite its unpredictability.*
- *Conservatives defer to authority, while classical liberals are suspicious of it.*
- *Conservatives are suspicious of democracy, while for classical liberals, the question is not who governs but what is governed.*
- *Conservatives fear new ideas, while classical liberals embrace them.*
- *Conservatives are hostile to internationalism and embrace strident nationalism, while classical liberals are internationalists and suspicious of nationalism.*
- *Conservatives look to religion for inspiration for temporal decisions, while classical liberals support a sharp distinction between the spiritual and temporal.*

“I really call myself a classical liberal more than a conservative, because what that means is we believe in those core principles that made this country great: liberty, freedom, equality, self-determination, the Constitution.”



— House Speaker **Paul Ryan**,
Oct. 14, 2016, in address to College Republicans in Madison

Critics of Hayek thought his essay was more applicable to European conservatism than to American conservatism, which was more influenced by classical liberal values in the founding.

While these tensions existed within the conservative movement throughout its history, the identification of common enemies in communism, socialism and progressivism overcame these tensions. Will that continue in the future?

Modern liberalism and classical liberalism

The roots of modern liberalism can be found in the classical liberalism of the 18th century, but there was a major break around 1900. The common characteristic of liberalism — both classical and modern — is the importance of freedom.

Liberalism is individualistic, placing the primacy of the individual against the collective. Liberalism is egalitarian, in the sense that all people have moral status. Liberalism is internationalist, in the sense of the moral unity of the human species. Liberalism is meliorist in that it believes in the ability to improve institutions, although it does not have a utopian belief in the ability to create a perfect world.

In the 19th century, liberalism was unified around these principles: laissez-faire economics, free trade, democracy as a check on government, the centrality of private property, the moral value of the individual and a distrust of government. The big division was whether this liberalism was justified by utilitarianism — the happiness of the greatest number — or by an appeal to natural rights, derived from God or reason.

A key moment in the breakup of liberalism was Mill's book *On the Principles of Political Economy*, which drew a sharp distinction between the production of wealth and the distribution of wealth. While liberals then, and classical liberals today,

Misunderstanding 'Classical Liberal'

“Ryan may be taking the plunge, coming out of the liberal closet. He may be ready to admit what many of us have known since before he became Speaker, during his times pushing TPP and open borders. ... Ryan took that first step in coming out as the closet fascist we know him to be. He declared himself to be a ‘classical liberal more than a conservative.’ That’s progress, Ryan; while there’s nothing classical about you, the liberal point is undeniable.”

— *At truthfeed.com*, in an October 2016 post titled “WOW! Traitor Paul Ryan Admits He’s a LIBERAL, NOT a Conservative”

“Who knew!? ... Being a classical liberal while serving as a Republican congressman makes Paul Ryan a bona fide hack. ... With liberals daily at our heels ... we need strong congressional leaders. ... What we do not need is a feckless RINO Hacky Sack sabotaging us at every step of the way!”

— *V. Saxena on downtrend.com*, in an October 2016 post titled “Paul Ryan unveils DEEP SECRET, proves Trump was 100% right about him”

“What a turncoat, he even admits it!”
“Traitor. Way to blow your political future!”

— *Comments on reddit.com*

believe that the production of wealth is shaped by whether distribution is determined by the free market or by state intervention, Mill suggested that changing the way wealth was distributed would have little effect on its production.

The emergence of modern liberalism, then called New Liberalism, can be identified around 1890. I prefer to call it welfare liberalism. This was associated with thinkers such as T.H. Green, Bernard Bosanquet and L.T. Hobhouse. The key features are: The individual was the product of the community; freedom is the ability to satisfy your wants (positive freedom); and the state’s role was to create the conditions for positive freedom.

There are eight key differences between classical and modern liberalism:

• *How is freedom defined? Classical liberals (and most conservatives) have a so-called negative definition of freedom, seeing it as the lack of interference by others. Modern liberals have a positive conception of freedom: Freedom means the ability to satisfy your wants.*

• *Classical liberals see government as coercive, as using force or the threat of force to get citizens to do what it wants. Modern liberals see government as liberating individuals from the constraints of society.*

• *Classical liberals see private property as a fundamental right that is most important to protect, while modern liberals see private property as only one right among many, and a right that might be sacrificed for other goals.*

• *Classical liberals (and most conservatives) believe in free markets, while modern liberals favor state intervention in the economy.*

• *Classical liberals believe that the primary provision of*

welfare for the poor and those in difficulty should lie with the community, or civil society, while modern liberals believe that this is the responsibility of the welfare state.

•Classical liberals (and most conservatives) believe that justice is about fair procedures, while modern liberals believe in “social justice,” fair distribution.

•Classical liberals (and most conservatives) believe in equality before the law. Modern liberals believe in economic equality, that the state should guarantee some level of economic equality.

•Classical liberals (and most conservatives) believe that government should be restrained and limited, while modern liberals believe that the job of government is to pursue the common good, and therefore constraints on government should be removed to achieve that goal.

Modern liberals have strayed so far from the original ideas of liberalism that most no longer deserve that label. Many modern liberals now embrace the more accurate term: “progressive.”

Sen. Robert La Follette of Wisconsin was a leading proponent of progressivism in the early 20th century. Key features of progressivism are that the individual is to be subordinated to the common good; decisions should be made by experts, which led to the growth of the administrative state; and economic equality is a primary goal of government, even at the expense of liberty.

The future of classical liberalism

Classical liberals are deeply suspicious of the populist turn in the era of Donald Trump. There is much discussion about the meaning of the term “populism.” Sometimes it is used to describe a style of politics. It is a political movement led by charismatic individuals, using fiery rhetoric, against the elite and claiming to act on behalf of the people. The populist style can be both right wing and left wing, such as Hugo Chavez in Venezuela.

Populism favors protectionism, nationalism and a lack of concern about constraints on government. It holds that businesses should operate in the national interest, rather than the interests of the company. This goes against fundamental beliefs of classical liberals in free trade, internationalism, restraints on government and that business should operate in a free market. But many conservatives

and classical liberals agree on these points.

Can classical liberals and conservatives unite against many features of this new populism, while supporting particular policies that promote freedom, especially in the economic realm?

Classical liberals argue that they have more in common with modern liberals than with populists or conservatives. I think this would be true if modern liberals were liberals, but they have largely abandoned their faith in the freedom of the individual in favor of progressivism. So on some issues, such as civil liberties, they may be able to cooperate, but those areas may be very limited.

Do liberalism and conservatism still describe the Democratic and Republican parties? I think not. Instead, they are progressives and populists.

So what is the future role of classical liberals and conservatives? One option is to create new political parties. But a better option is to rebuild the coalition between classical liberals and conservatives, and take back the Republican Party.

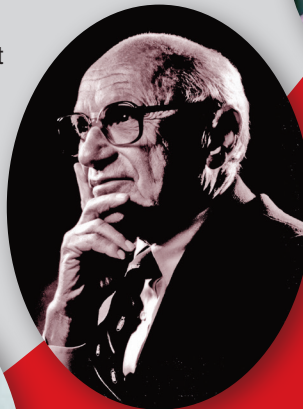
The question is not whether Paul Ryan is a classical liberal. It's whether Donald Trump is a conservative and whether Elizabeth Warren is a liberal. **WI**



Paul Ryan
2016



Charles Koch
2015



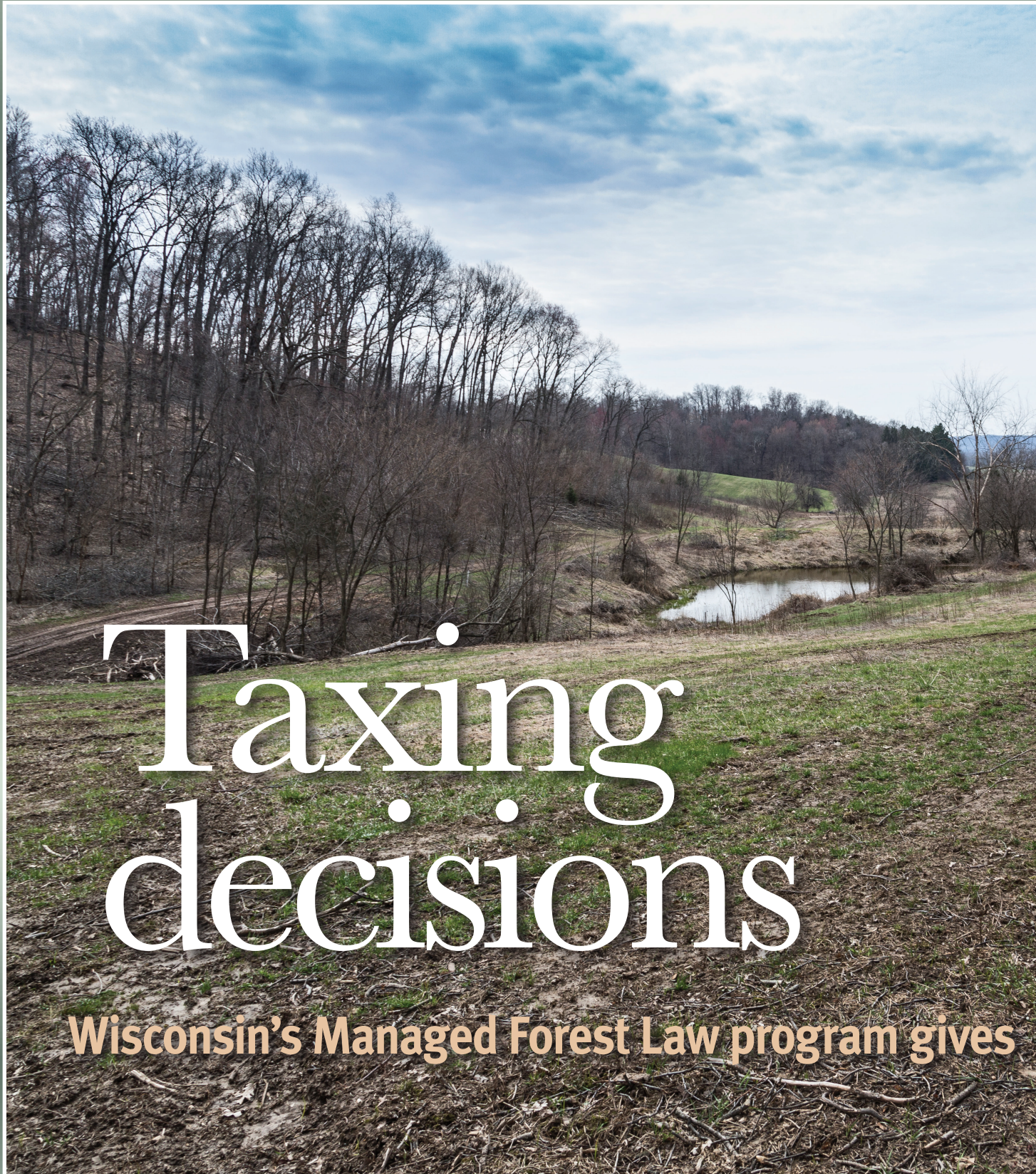
Milton Friedman
2004



Friedrich Hayek
1950

The roots of modern liberalism can be found in the classical liberalism of the 18th century, but there was a major break around 1900.

The common characteristic of liberalism — both classical and modern — is the importance of freedom.



Greg Wipperfurth of Sauk County has 185 acres enrolled in Wisconsin's Managed Forest Law program.



Wipperfurth and his son Tony split wood that they have logged in accordance with DNR guidelines.



By Brian Reisinger

Spring Green — The reasons for one of rural Wisconsin's best-known — yet lowest-profile — tax breaks converge here on Greg Wipperfurth's land in rural Sauk County.

Leaning on a workbench in his shop on a recent March morning, Wipperfurth, 59, is as much of a poster boy as you'll get for how Wisconsin depends upon its woodland.

tax breaks to some, while it shifts burden to others

TOM LYNN PHOTOS

Forest

Hanging on the walls around him is taxidermy of all kinds — whitetail deer, turkey and a line of pelts that includes otter, mink, skunk, raccoon and coyote. Until a few years ago, he operated a pheasant farm that drew hunters from all over.

Out the window over his shoulder, hulking pyramids of logs line the dirt logging road that winds up into his woods. Soon loggers will return to haul away the logs for sale, and Wipperfurth will get a little money in his pocket. With his arms crossed and a smile on his face, Wipperfurth talks about taxes — and hunting and logging — in between poking fun at his sons as they work to grind meat on a nearby table.

“Taxes!” he says, when asked why he enrolled 185 acres in the Managed Forest Law program, recounting how the local school district has continually increased its levy on residents. “You can’t afford to pay the taxes if you want to own land.”

With more than 3.3 million acres enrolled, according to state data, Wisconsin’s Managed Forest Law program covers nearly one-tenth of the state’s land and has meant major tax breaks benefiting a wide swath of landowners — from small property taxpayers such as Wipperfurth to large lumber companies to nature conservancies. At the same time, the

tax cuts — for some landowners a reduction of 5 percent or more from local levies — shift the tax burden onto neighboring taxpayers.

With nearly \$90 million in cumulative tax savings for beneficiaries (and perhaps the same in higher taxes for others), the Managed Forest Law program and its earlier iterations have shaped the use of Wisconsin’s woodland for generations, demonstrating how easily special tax provisions can become irreversibly tangled up in our economy and culture.

Owners of woodland across the board — nearly any farmer can tell you about the program — echo Wipperfurth’s sentiments. Proponents from both the left and the right hail the program’s benefits to Wisconsin’s economy and conservation efforts. Still, a program that benefits some taxpayers and increases the burden on others creates a dilemma that some Wisconsinites say deserves more scrutiny. While the program has not generated hot controversy by Wisconsin’s considerable standard for political fights, it has been regaled, raided and reformed over the years while quietly affecting virtually every Wisconsinite in some way.

Like the roots of the big oaks on Greg Wipperfurth’s land,

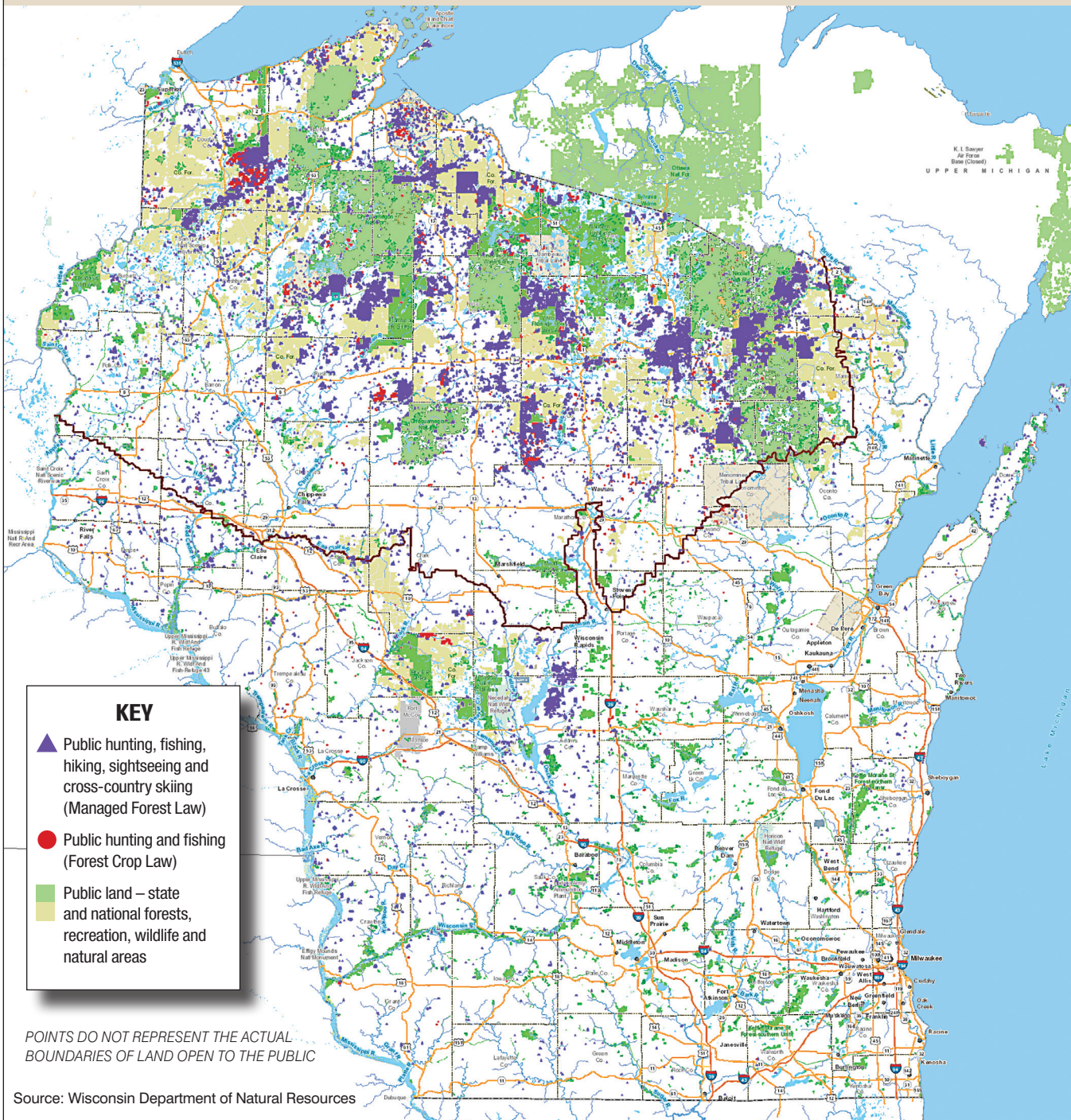


Tony Wipperfurth helps his father, Greg, split logs in Sauk County.

TOM LYNN PHOTO

Managed forestland open to the public

While about two-thirds of the land under Wisconsin's Managed Forest Law program is closed to the public, about 1 million acres of privately owned land are open to the public for recreational purposes. The purple on the map shows where much of that publicly open land is located, mostly in the northern part of the state. The red represents land that is open to the public under the related Forest Crop Law program.



the program's effects — good and bad — run deep, whether Wisconsinites see them or not.

History and purpose

The basic concept of the Managed Forest Law program is simple: Taxpayers who own forestland are able to enroll in the program and forgo local property taxes. Instead, they pay a range of modified — virtually always lower — taxes to the state that are used in various ways on the state and local level.

The program results in participants getting a tax break in return for keeping their land wooded and logging it in accordance with Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources guidelines, while potentially creating recreational opportunities for their fellow Wisconsinites.

There are two levels of tax breaks, depending upon whether the land is closed or open to the public. About 68 percent of the managed forestland in Wisconsin is closed to the public, according to the DNR, while about 32 percent is open to the public for hunting, hiking and other activities, in return for an even lower tax rate.

The origins of the Managed Forest Law program extend all the way back to before the Great Depression, when in 1927 the state passed the Forest Crop Law program. Policy-makers designed it to reverse the devastation that poor forestry practices had wrought on Wisconsin's woodlands — crucial to the state's logging, construction, paper and other industries — while preserving public land for environmental and recreational opportunities.

In 1954, the state passed the Woodland Tax Law, which, according to a University of Wisconsin Ex-

tension history, allowed tax incentives to apply to small tracts of land and let landowners keep their parcels private if they wished. While some might argue that having the land closed to the public is unfair since all taxpayers are paying for the tax breaks, allowing landowners to participate without opening up their land to anyone democratized the program among farmers and other individual owners.

The Managed Forest Law program is the modern combination of these programs, but even today, small farmers across the state are likely to say they've put their land into "Woodland Tax," which is shorthand for the 1954 law.

Taxes, logging and lifestyle dilemmas

The bottom line is owners of managed forestland get a considerable tax break, while other property owners without acreage in the program pay more. Dale Knapp, research director with the nonpartisan Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance, said that because it's a break from locally established taxes, the tax shift is most acute within counties and towns where there is ample managed forestland.

“You can’t afford to pay the taxes if you want to own land.”

— Greg Wipperfurth,
Sauk County
landowner

“So when you have these properties that are in the (Managed Forest Law program) that aren't being taxed, that's shifting then some of the property tax burden to other

property tax owners,” Knapp says.

How big of a shift? According to the Wisconsin Department of Revenue, local taxpayers in the Managed Forest Law program most recently saved a cumulative \$90 million on an annual basis. Knapp says that number might be roughly the amount of money shifted to other taxpayers, but it's a complicated picture. If you were to remove the state program, taxpayers affected would be paying local rates that vary widely — and could change as local governments react to no longer having the program in place.

“Really, the impact is local,” Knapp says.

That's a unique aspect of the Managed Forest Law program. The counties where people see the benefits of the program — from tax reductions to a strong logging industry to good deer hunting — are also the places where other taxpayers have



shouldered the largest shift in tax burden. This tends to mute the dissent, but it doesn't mean people aren't frustrated.

According to the Tax Foundation, a nonpartisan research group, tax shifts of all kinds can create broad inequities in the tax system. These in turn hamper overall economic growth that a free-market system would encourage if not for incentives spurring some kinds of activity and, therefore, limiting others.

For instance, the group says that property tax systems by state and local governments often seek to please local residents by keeping residential property taxes low and raising them on commercial and industrial properties. That means less development and higher costs for customers of future businesses or tenants of future rental properties. At the same time, governments seek to encourage economic development projects by granting tax abatements to individual companies or developments, leading to charges of "corporate welfare" by individual taxpayers who never see their own windfall from the government.

The result is deep distrust of the property tax system. A 2009 Tax Foundation survey found that 55 percent of respondents called their local property tax system "not fair" or "not at all fair," while only 5 percent called it "fair."

"A better approach would be property tax systems that tax all property alike," wrote Joseph Henchman, the Foundation's vice president of legal and state projects.

Impact of the tax shift

So what is the particular impact of the Managed Forest Law program? An analysis of Department of Revenue data found that five counties — Oneida, Lincoln, Shawano, Marinette and Waupaca — likely experience the largest shift in tax burden among property taxpayers, because those counties have the largest amount of assessed property under the Managed Forest Law program. The most pronounced is in Oneida County, a quintessential Northwoods part of Wisconsin, where an analysis found that local taxpayers who do not have Managed Forest Law land could see their property tax rates drop by about 5 percent if the program didn't exist.

Second on the list is Lincoln County, where those who don't have managed forestland could see their property taxes drop by about 2.3 percent if the program didn't exist, according to the analysis.

Mike Rozmiarek has 40 acres in Lincoln County enrolled in the program's closed option, meaning the land is not open to the public. He knows there are higher taxes for others who

don't have land in the program — including himself back at home in Manitowoc — but he also says the program helps ensure a strong source of lumber and provides both public and private hunting land that is the mainstay of the state's deer hunting tradition.

"Part of that is a lot of people don't look at that forest as a crop," Rozmiarek says.

Jim VandenBrook, executive director of the Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association, says the benefit goes beyond the immediate value of lumber and cultural pastimes like hunting, to even include necessities like clean water. Having a strong Wisconsin woodland helps mitigate erosion and run-off that can contaminate local streams, rivers and wells, he says.

Maybe so, but for every action there's an equal and opposite reaction — and Cory Tomczyk isn't sure

he likes his odds. The owner of IROW, a recycling company in Mosinee on the cusp of the Northwoods, says he understands that there once may have been a need to encourage reforestation, but that as the pendulum swings back, he worries that the program's shift in the tax burden is "not equitable."

And with eight acres and a 40,000-square-foot recycling facility — humming each day with forklifts and conveyor belts transporting bales of paper inside — Tomczyk's tax burden isn't just about him. Yes, he's a conservative who'd like to have more money in his own pocket and cheers Wisconsin's tax cuts in recent years. But as he deals with taxes and regulations from Washington, as well as state and local taxes, he also thinks of his business' ability to thrive and his employees.

"I'm trying to maintain a business for the betterment of my family and the families I employ," says Tomczyk, who jokes that his title at IROW is "chief debtor." "And anything that

Tax shifts can create inequities in the tax system. These in turn hamper economic growth that a free-market system would encourage, according to the Tax Foundation.



takes away from the ability to pay them hurts them. This is family — we know everybody here.”

Raiding and reforming

The program has not been free of abuse or other trade-offs.

State Sen. Tom Tiffany sits in a Joint Finance Committee hearing at the state Capitol. His eyes narrow as he studies the papers in front of him, then looks up to gaze at the government officials debating the 2017-'19 budget proposal.

Tiffany is working to dial in on every penny in the state budget, but he'd just as soon be in the Northwoods.

The Republican from Hazelhurst — whose district includes woods in No. 1 managed forestland hotspot Oneida County — often walks the logging sites of northern Wisconsin in a cap and jacket, talking with locals about issues affecting the local economy. It's why he worked to reform the Managed Forest Law program when he saw it becoming associated with both burdensome regulations and abuse.

In 2015, reforms Tiffany sponsored were signed into law. The legislation streamlined the program in many ways, such as making it easier to get logging approved so that small landowners trying to fuel the logging industry didn't face undue red tape. The reforms also reversed a Doyle administration move that Tiffany says seized about \$6 million in Managed Forest Land money for state government use, instead of letting it revert to local governments.

Gov. Jim Doyle “raided local property taxes,” Tiffany says. “It's like any program; it needs to be managed properly.”

Then there's the issue of who is benefiting.

It's true that there are scores of small, individual landowners — such as farmer Terry Sprecher of Richland County, who would have sold his 40 acres for development long ago without the Managed Forest Law program. Instead, his land is available to the public, and when loggers harvest the jack pine, it goes toward an important commodity — toilet paper.

But that land remaining in woodland also means economic development through the commercial or residential markets that isn't happening. And not all landowners are small or local — such as Meteor Timber LLC, which owns about 12,000 acres of managed forestland in Adams County alone, accord-

ing to DNR records. Meteor, which according to the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* is the largest private landowner in the state, is involved in economic development projects that mean lots of investment and jobs but also complaints from environmental activists.

Meteor is owned by Timberland Investment Resources, an Atlanta-based investment company that did not respond to requests for comment for this story. Regardless, Meteor's

example further illustrates the trade-offs of the program. The company's Adams County acreage is open to the public, meaning that in return for tax breaks to the subsidiary of a large, out-of-state company, Wisconsinites can access thousands of acres for recreation. Meanwhile, many small, private landowners in the program keep their land closed.

Still, DNR records show thousands of individual landowners using the program. From a recreational standpoint, the open

land (about 32 percent of all managed forestland) is often used for hiking and hunting. While private land (about 68 percent) is not accessible to the entire public, it's also the source of superior hunting land — compared to the over-hunted public parcels — accessed often by hunters who are on friendly terms with local landowners.

And all of it fuels the logging industry and associated economic sectors. The folks at Biewer Wisconsin Sawmill in Prentice, which makes treated wood for decks and other uses in the housing industry, say the program is important because it keeps Wisconsin's logging industry humming. “It's an important program, without a doubt,” says assistant plant manager Thad Henderson, who estimated that as much as 25 percent of the company's logs come from small, individual landowners.

Landowners like Greg Wipperfurth in Sauk County. As his sons finish grinding meat in the shop, he reflects on the economics of it, noting that he could sell the land for development but that the tax break and logging revenue mean he can afford to keep it around for hunting. He'd like to keep the land if he can — and his sons would like it, too. **WI**



TOM LYNN PHOTO

Greg Wipperfurth displays hunting trophies in his workshop.

Brian Reisinger is a conservative writer from Wisconsin. He is the founder of the Wisconsin-based communications firm Hilltop Strategies and has worked as a journalist and political staffer in Wisconsin, Tennessee and Washington, D.C.

Milwaukee = ‘Donor’ or drain?

By Dan Benson

Mayor argues
for more shared
revenue but doesn't
count all state
aid and ignores
proposed increases

Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett's argument that his city is a "donor" to the state of Wisconsin and therefore deserves more shared revenue hasn't much chance of making it into the 2017-'18 biennial budget under consideration in Madison.

"Zero chance," says Rep. Dale Kooyenga (R-Brookfield), a member of the Legislature's Joint Finance Committee.

"We (in the Legislature) have shown so much support for Milwaukee — for more transportation or the lakefront project, MPS and the Bucks arena — and then there's these requests that they are victims of some huge injustice in forms of funding. ... Zero chance" that Milwaukee will see an increase in shared revenue, he says.

But that prospect hasn't kept Barrett and Milwaukee politicians from trying.

Earlier this year, Barrett and Common Council President Ashanti Hamilton made the case that Milwaukee is a "donor" to the state and is often unfairly characterized as a drain on the state.

In a *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* op-ed, the two said the state benefits



Shared Revenue

from a “Milwaukee dividend,” meaning the city gives more than it gets back. They cited a Wisconsin Department of Revenue report showing that the city gets back 66.26 percent, in the form of shared revenue, of what it pays to the state. They made the same pitch to the Greater Milwaukee Committee, and Barrett made it a major part of his State of the City address on March 6.

“If anyone tells you that Milwaukee is a drain on the state, correct them immediately,” Barrett said. “The city of Milwaukee is a donor. The state benefits by having Milwaukee here. And I want to change that narrative.”



Barrett

Barrett made the pitch just as Gov. Scott Walker and legislators began wrestling with the 2017-'19 biennial budget.

Later in March, members of the Milwaukee Democratic Caucus wrote a letter to the Joint Finance Committee asking that the city's shared revenue allotment be increased, especially to help the Police Department:

“We are concerned that shared revenue has not increased for local municipalities while costs continue to rise. Public safety expenditures consume the largest part of municipal budgets and are being driven up by wage settlements and increasing costs to fund pensions and health benefits. Revenue collections cannot keep pace. ...

“The Police and Fire Departments cannot be sustained at this rate without an increase in shared revenue or some other new revenue stream.”

Rep. David Crowley, who authored the letter, says, “I'm glad the governor is putting more money into the pockets of everyone, but when it comes down to shared revenue and the services we have to provide for people, we have to make sure we fund those services.”

Shared revenue to Milwaukee has dropped in recent years, from \$230.6 million in 2005 to nearly \$219 million last year. Meanwhile, the Police Department budget has risen about \$90 million over the same span to \$277 million, city figures show.

But Walker's proposed budget is doing, at least in part, what Barrett wants, GOP legislators say. The budget calls for a \$40 million increase in general transportation aid to counties and municipalities. Walker also is proposing a \$649 million increase in school aid, with \$9 million targeted at Milwaukee Public Schools. The budget would increase the per-student payment from \$250 this year to \$450 in the 2017-'18 school year and \$654 in the 2018-'19 school year.

The budget also would increase the Earned Income Tax

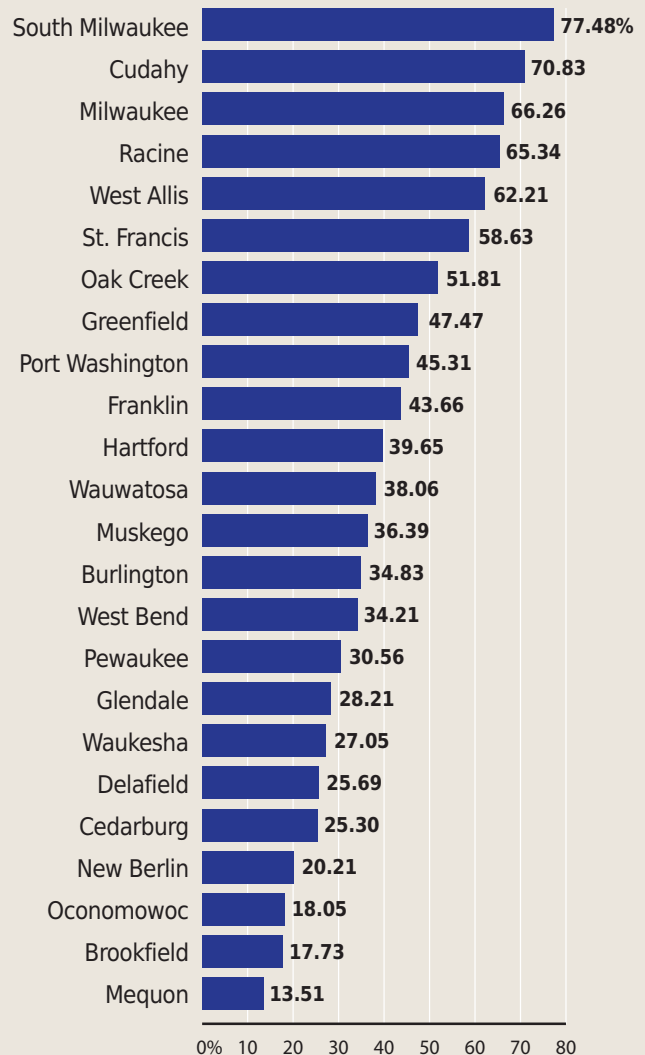
Credit by \$20 million for an estimated 130,000 poor working families. Students in the University of Wisconsin System, including UW-Milwaukee, would see a tuition freeze the first year and a 5 percent tuition cut the second year, as well as the chance to opt out of some fees.

Revenue report cited

To make their case, Barrett and Hamilton cited a Department of Revenue report, “State Taxes and Aids By Municipality and County For Calendar Year 2015,” published last November.

State Aid to Metro-Area Cities – 2015

Milwaukee gets back a higher percentage of revenue paid to the state than most cities.



Source: Wisconsin Department of Revenue

Milwaukee residents and businesses, the report estimates, sent more than \$1.37 billion in revenue to Madison in 2015 from all income, sales, utility and other taxes, while the city received \$912 million in shared revenue, about a 66 percent return. Milwaukee County got even less back on a percentage basis, sending \$2.5 billion to Madison and getting back \$1.45 billion, or 57.49 percent.

"Wisconsin's taxpayers residing outside of our county," Barrett and Hamilton wrote in the *Journal Sentinel*, "are benefiting by more than a billion dollars in tax revenue from Milwaukee. ... We are providing a robust and growing 'Milwaukee dividend' to our state's coffers."

Hidden figures

But Barrett and Hamilton weren't counting every form of state aid.

While the Department of Revenue report considered all sources of revenue paid by the city and county to the state, including those paid by individuals such as income taxes, it only counts state aid such as general shared revenue, school aid, first dollar and lottery credit, natural resources aid and transportation aid coming back to Milwaukee. It leaves out large swaths of state funding, including payments to individuals such as Medicaid and unemployment benefits, which are paid in large measure by the state.

Not included were:

- **More than \$631 million in state Medicaid payments to county residents in 2013, the most recent figures available, the state Department of Health Services estimates.**
- **\$108 million in 2015 state funding to UWM, which primarily serves residents of Milwaukee County and its neighbors, according to the university website.**
- **Nearly \$90 million in state unemployment benefits paid by the state and Milwaukee employers to county residents — almost \$62 million to city residents, Department of Workforce Development spokesman John Dipko says.**
- **\$7.8 million in salaries for 120 staffers in the Milwaukee County district attorney's office, who are state employees.**
- **More than \$6 million to the Milwaukee County Circuit Court's 47 judges, all state employees.**
- **\$4.3 million in state court support payments to Milwaukee County, including the Clerk of Circuit Courts Office, for fiscal 2017.**
- **\$600,000 in salaries for the 12 people who staff the Milwaukee County public defender's office, according to the Department of Administration.**

"How do you not count Medicaid?" Kooyenga asks. "That's a big part of the state budget. It's bogus accounting (by Barrett). He's counting what he wants, and he's not counting other things."



Kooyenga

Todd Berry, president of the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance, agrees.

"While it is true that over the last few years, as state aid has flattened and (Milwaukee's) economy has recovered, they have become a donor community compared to what they were a few years back," Berry says. "The big hitch is (Barrett and Hamilton) are only talking about shared revenue. They really suck in the money when it comes to Medicaid. A quarter of all Medicaid

dollars are spent in Milwaukee County."

Asked why Medicaid and other aid to Milwaukee residents were not counted by the mayor, Barrett's chief of staff, Patrick Curley, replied in an email:

"Seventy-two percent of the region's poor are within the city — second only to San Antonio metro for metro concentration of poverty. That's a staggering statistic that can't and should not be minimized. The fact that people are talking about state aids and locally generated revenues is good and a conversation that Mayor Barrett looks forward to having."

Low returns

In addition to not counting all the city receives, Milwaukee's 66 percent return rate is better than that of most communities.

In Milwaukee County, only Cudahy (70.83 percent) and South Milwaukee (77.48 percent) get back a higher percentage of state aid than Milwaukee. River Hills gets back only 19 cents on the dollar; Glendale just 28.2 percent. Mequon gets the worst return, 13.5 percent, among cities in the five-county area. Brookfield and Oconomowoc each get back less than 20 percent.

Milwaukee's return exceeds most other Wisconsin cities, which average 51.03 percent. The average for all Wisconsin municipalities, including towns and villages, is 55.69 percent.

Among surrounding counties, only Racine County does better than Milwaukee County at 62.11 percent, while Waukesha County (36.8 percent), Washington County (35.98 percent) and Ozaukee County (25 percent) do worse. [WI](#)

Dan Benson is editor of WPRI's *Project for 21st Century Federalism* and a former editor and reporter with the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* and *Gannett Wisconsin*.

A Deadly Grip

Wisconsin's opioid scourge: Its origins and possible solutions

By *Ike Brannon and Devorah Goldman*

The nation is enmeshed in a drug abuse problem that appears unmatched in our country's history, and Wisconsin has keenly felt its effects.

The statistics are staggering. Today, nationwide, deaths from drug overdose — mainly caused by opioids — exceed 16 per 100,000 people. In West Virginia, the rate is over 41 per 100,000; in New Hampshire, it's over 34. By comparison, at the height of the heroin crisis following the Vietnam War and during the crack epidemic of the late 1980s, deaths from drug overdose peaked at 1.5 to 2 people per 100,000.

In Wisconsin over the past decade, the rate of opioid overdose deaths nearly doubled — from 5.9 deaths per 100,000 in 2006 to 10.7 deaths per 100,000 in 2015.

The number of Wisconsinites who die per year from a drug overdose exceeds the number who die from motor vehicle crashes, suicide, breast cancer, colon cancer, firearms, influenza or HIV.

The Wisconsin Legislature and the Walker administration have taken steps to combat the opioid crisis, which is exacting a high toll in Wisconsin in both human and monetary costs.

The Badger state's drug epidemic

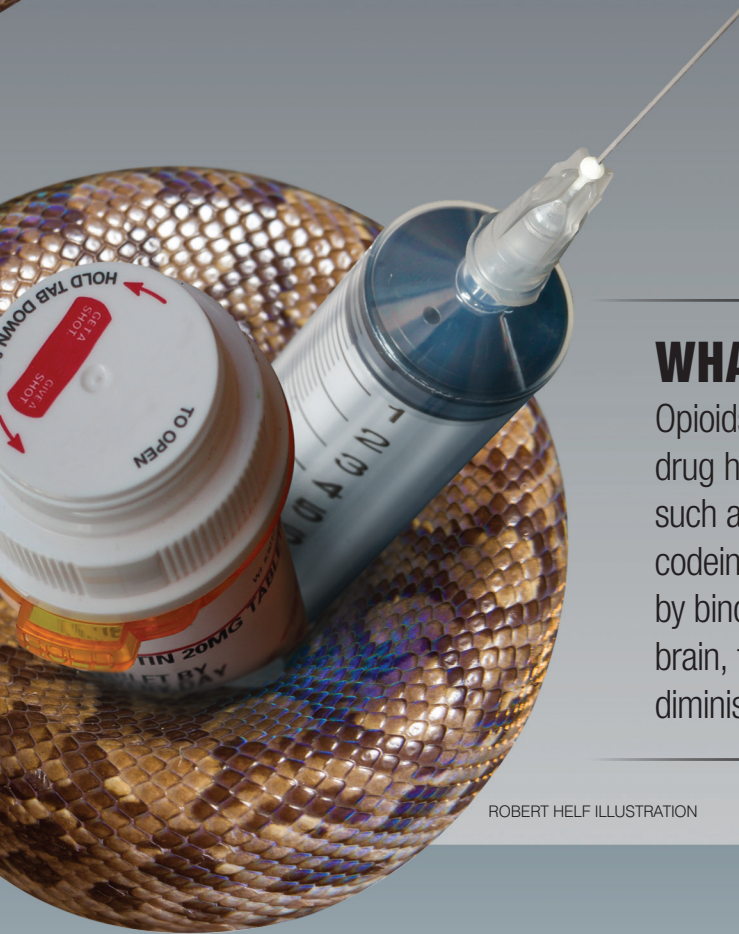
Drugs typically reach rural Wisconsin via Chicago. Many big-city smugglers find the relative safety of

selling drugs in smaller communities such as Superior appealing — and profitable. There are few dangerous rivalries, and the lack of competition means dealers can charge more to a — sadly — growing number of people willing to pay. The long string of middlemen between dealers in Chicago and small towns in Wisconsin also makes it harder for authorities to track suspects. So the trade thrives, and entire communities — down to the youngest among us — suffer.

In the past few years, the number of babies born in Wisconsin with physical dependence on opioids, a condition known as neonatal abstinence syndrome, quadrupled — with nearly 1% of all infants showing signs of NAS. Symptoms include low birth weight, seizures, respiratory distress syndrome and feeding difficulties.

The cost of treating NAS is astronomical. A study published last year in the *Wisconsin Medical Journal* reported that newborns with NAS spend an average of 16 days in the hospital, with a typical charge of \$45,000, a good portion of which goes on the government's tab. Further, NAS is associated with a higher probability of long-term health issues.





ROBERT HELF ILLUSTRATION

WHAT ARE OPIOIDS?

Opioids are a class of drugs that include the illegal drug heroin as well as prescription pain medications such as oxycodone (OxyContin), hydrocodone (Vicodin), codeine, fentanyl, methadone and morphine. They work by binding to receptors on nerve cells in the body and brain, thus reducing pain messages to the brain and diminishing feelings of pain.

Slow descent into darkness

For Madison woman, opioid abuse made pain disappear, but it hijacked her life

By Jan Uebelherr

Think of a snake.

It's quiet. It moves slowly, steadily, almost imperceptibly. It wraps itself around its prey, tightening its grip as the prey weakens.

To understand the anatomy of opioid addiction, think of the snake.

At the height of her heroin addiction, Skye Tikkanen's day began like this: "Every morning for five years, my first thought was, 'How am I going to use?'"

And my second thought was, 'I hate my life.'

"It's like you're not in charge of your brain anymore. It's a horrible, horrible way to live."



Skye Tikkanen

ALLEN FREDRICKSON PHOTO

Cover Story

Children, teenagers and young adults in Wisconsin are suffering, too. In Milwaukee County, four toddlers died from opioid overdoses last year. In northern Wisconsin, a 4-year-old suffered permanent brain damage in a car accident after his father passed out from an overdose while driving. In 2013, 15 percent of all Wisconsin high school students reported having used prescription drugs, such as the extended-release opioid painkiller OxyContin, for non-medical purposes.

Hospitalizations of young people for problems related to drug abuse have been rising in Wisconsin for years — nearly quadrupling from 2003 to 2012 among individuals ages 12 to 25. And many of them will never get well.

Deaths from heroin overdose have tripled in Wisconsin since 2010 — with 281 such deaths in 2015. Nationwide, there has been a stark increase since 2013 in deaths from fentanyl overdose. While often mistaken for heroin, fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that is around 100 times more potent than heroin. In Milwaukee


County alone, 97 people died from fentanyl poisoning in 2016, a 223 percent increase from the previous year.

So far this year, 57 people in Milwaukee County have died from opioid overdoses. In April, two deaths in the county were linked to carfentanil, an opioid used to sedate large animals that is 100 times more potent than fentanyl and 10,000 times more potent than morphine. It is sometimes added to heroin to increase potency.

The drug problem in Wisconsin is an increasing threat to both the health of individuals and the welfare of the state. Grasping the scope of the epidemic is crucial, but it is also important to understand how the drug problem began in order to craft effective solutions.

How did we get here?

In the mid-1990s, a number of medical groups began agitating for sufferers of chronic pain to be treated with opioid medicines. These efforts yielded significant changes in prescribing practices, and from 1991 to



“The first time you use (an opioid), it works amazingly well. Over time, it works less well. That diminishes until you’re in a place way darker than where you started.” — *Skye Tikkanen*

The road to that place was nearly perfectly paved. She had a family history of substance abuse — mostly alcohol — not by her parents but by her grandparents and great-grandparents.

She also has a painful genetic disorder affecting collagen in her joints. The disorder also affects blood flow to the brain, leading to anxiety. On top of that, she comes from a line of big achievers.

“My family is really smart, really accomplished,” Tikkanen says. “And there was a lot of pressure.” Her great-grandmothers went to college and were businesswomen at a time when that was rare. “They’ve all been trailblazers,” she says. “In my head, I was like, ‘I have to do this or I’m letting a lot of people down.’ A lot of anxiety centered around getting straight As, getting the lead in the school play.”

Her father is a technical editor and novelist, and her mother is an evolutionary biologist whose work took the family all over the country for research and teaching positions. “Depending on who my mom wanted to research with, or what animal she was studying, our family just went to wherever,” she says.

They lived in New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Mas-

sachusetts and Maryland.

How her addictions began

Tikkanen’s addictions took hold while the family lived in Baltimore. At the time, Baltimore had emerged as the heroin capital of America, in a drug epidemic that was about to creep steadily across the country.

Tikkanen started to experiment with alcohol when she was 12. She’d siphon off a bit of crème de menthe from her parents’ liquor cabinet during slumber parties. It was easy to steal just a bit. It wouldn’t be noticed the way a can of beer or two would be.

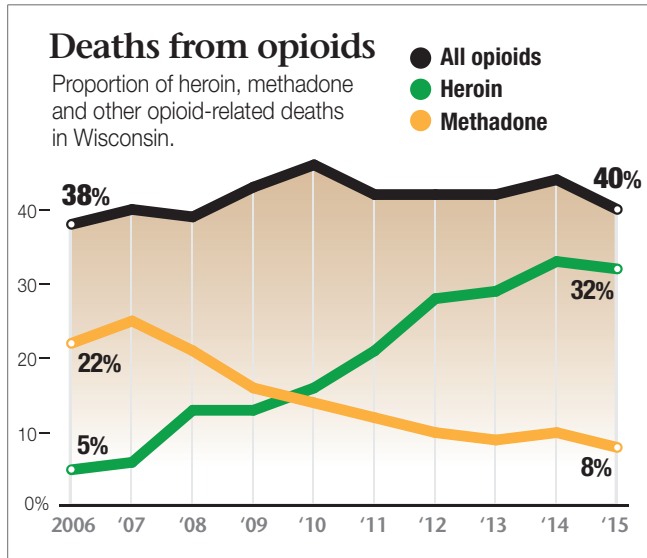
She moved on to marijuana. “I didn’t like pot very much. It made me anxious. It made me eat a lot. Neither of those things were fun. I moved on from that pretty quickly,” she says.

Around age 15, she started exploring the rave scene in the D.C. area. “There was cocaine and Ecstasy and ketamine,” she says. Ketamine is similar to tranquilizers.

She used them all, and her parents didn’t know. “I still did well in school. On paper, I was a really good kid — good

2013, opioid prescriptions tripled nationwide.

What followed was utterly predictable, in retrospect:



Sources: Wisconsin resident death certificates, Division of Public Health and Wisconsin Department of Health Services

As the everyday use of opioids increased, so did abuse. From 1999 to 2015, the drug-poisoning death rate in the United States nearly tripled, with deaths related to heroin and other opioids accounting for 75 percent of these, according to the National Center for Health Statistics.

Initially, from 1999 to 2009, heroin death rates remained low while opioid death rates were rising rapidly. That changed in 2010: Heroin death rates quadrupled over the next four years.

Evidence suggests that the change resulted from Purdue Pharma's reformulation of OxyContin. In August 2010, the drug manufacturer replaced OxyContin with an abuse-deterrent formulation that made it significantly more difficult to extract the full dose of oxycodone, the drug's opioid component. This made the drug far less appealing to abusers and led many to shift to a readily available and cheaper substitute: heroin. The reformulation coincided with an increased supply of heroin entering the United States from Mexico.

grades. So it would be easy to overlook that so much was going wrong in my life. I was in pain all the time. My body always hurt. I was always anxious," she says. "And so drugs gave me an escape."

She adds, "At that age, you can feel pretty invincible." She felt in control. Besides, everything in her life seemed to be going great.

She worked at family restaurants owned by her grandparents and was excelling in school. "It didn't seem like it was hurting me," she says. "And it wasn't a daily thing. Sometimes it wasn't even a weekly thing. And I was the one who kept other friends in check. 'You're using too much, I'm worried about it, I think you need to get into rehab.'"

Finally, her best friend did just that. In rehab, the friend met a guy and introduced him to Tikkanen. They began dating. He was a few years older and was a deejay. "In my 17-year-old brain, I thought he was cool," she says.

A year into the relationship, she found out he used heroin. She hit the roof and gave him an ultimatum. "It's me or the drugs. Pick one," she says.

His reply: "It's you. But for my last time, use with me."

He had to talk her into it, but she relented.

"For the first time, I was not in any pain. And all of my anxiety went away, and I just felt good and happy," she says. "People who don't have health issues probably feel like that normally.

For me, it was a very new and novel experience."

And so her five-year addiction to heroin began.

Heroin abuse escalates

"In the first six months, it was once a week. Then it was twice a week. Then every other day," she says. "And then it was like we didn't use on Tuesdays. And then it was every day and multiple times a day."

Her boyfriend had a trust fund. "So money wasn't a big issue," she says. And Baltimore reigned as America's heroin capital, "so it was easily available. Not hard to pay for, not hard to get."

Her boyfriend became abusive and controlling, she says. Her health suffered, too. She had an infection from drug use and nearly lost one of her legs.

"When I was 22, I realized if I stayed in the relationship, either he was going to kill me or the drug was going to kill me," she says. "It became clearer and clearer — I was going to die."

By then, her family had moved to Canada. She moved there, promising herself that she'd never be in an abusive relationship or use heroin again. She found that her younger sister was heavily into meth.

"She wanted me to go out with her friends," she says. "So then I started using meth."

To fund her use, Tikkanen turned to fraud — credit card, checks, mail. "That's what people were doing there," she says.

She was arrested seven times in Vancouver. She spent time in jail and an immigration holding facility.

Finally, she was told to leave the country. Barred from returning for two years, she was driven over the border and dropped off on American soil with a trash bag full of her clothes.

By then, her parents had moved to Madison. They sent her a bus ticket. “I rode a Greyhound bus with a



“On paper, I was a really good kid — good grades. So it would be easy to overlook that so much was going wrong in my life. I was in pain all the time. And so drugs gave me an escape.”

— Skye Tikkanen

bunch of Amish people and thought a lot about what I wanted my life to be,” she says. “I made the decision I was going to be honest with my family, seek help.”

Her sister already had done that. She’d moved to Madison six months earlier and gotten into a recovery program at Connections Counseling.

“She was the person who never gave up hope on me,” says Tikkanen, who began the hard work of recovery.

“I was honest with my parents. My mom cried a lot,” she says.

At Connections, she got into group sessions. After her first meeting, the director approached her and told her she’d be a great counselor, that

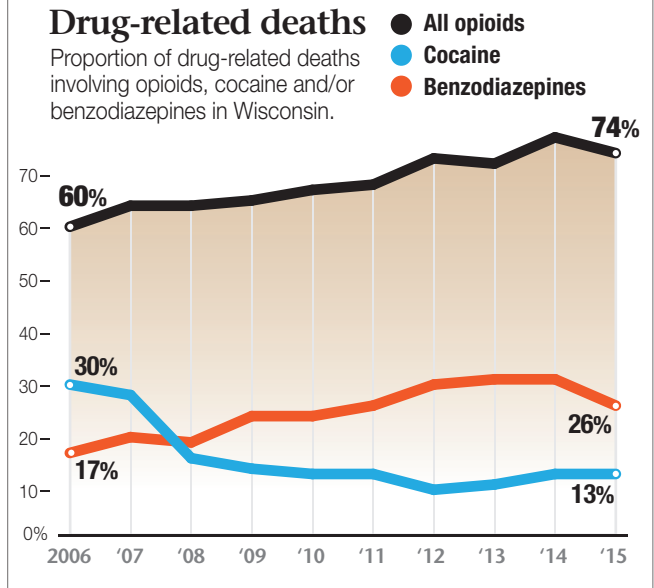
if she went to school and became qualified, she’d hire her.

This seemed unlikely to Tikkanen. But she began mentoring. “After some time, that suggestion didn’t seem so crazy,” she says. She went to school and got a bachelor’s degree in social work, then a master’s degree in community mental health.

At age 37, she’s the mother of two, clean for 14 years and a counselor at Connections for the past 11 years.

Drug-related deaths

Proportion of drug-related deaths involving opioids, cocaine and/or benzodiazepines in Wisconsin.



Sources: Wisconsin resident death certificates, Division of Public Health and Wisconsin Department of Health Services

“I knew that I could get higher faster, with something that would cost a lot less,” said Mandy, a Fond du Lac County woman profiled in a Wisconsin Department of Justice initiative to raise awareness. She began taking her grandmother’s OxyContin around age 19 and sharing it with friends. Later, she tried heroin and immediately became addicted — like so many others.

What can Wisconsin do?

Multiple factors have caused the opioid problem to metastasize in Wisconsin and across the country over the past decade, and it undoubtedly has a sociological component — economic hardship and other cultural shifts.

As Christopher Caldwell noted in his article, “American Carnage: The New Landscape of Opioid Addiction,” published in *First Things* in April, the “addict is, in his own, life-damaged way, rational. He’s too rational. ... Addicts, in their own short-circuited, reductive and destructive way, are armed with a sense of purpose.” Conversely, Caldwell observed, American society lacks the assurance and tenacity to confront any number of unpleasant truths, including that of widespread drug addiction.

Seeing the problem clearly as a disease with moral, economic and spiritual roots may be key to any attempt to address it effectively. And combating drug addiction requires understanding how to reach people struggling with it.

Since the drug problem is multifaceted, it is encouraging that the state's approach is multifaceted as well. Progress is being made.

In January, Gov. Scott Walker called for a special session on the opioid epidemic. A package of legislation is making its way through committees in Madison. The bills follow 17 measures already signed into law as part of the state's HOPE (Heroin, Opioid Prevention and Education) agenda, which has seen bipartisan support.

Last year, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services declared the state opioid epidemic a public health crisis. The governor created a Task Force on Opioid Abuse that has embraced the use of medication-assisted treatments such as buprenorphine to provide more options for first responders and counselors.

The task force is seeking to allow school personnel to administer drugs such as naloxone, an "opioid blocker" commonly called Narcan, in the case of a suspected overdose. The state may also wish to consider how best to utilize opioid blockers in other circumstances. Madison's Common Council recently reapproved a grant to provide police with naloxone auto-injectors so that they can quickly help individuals who have overdosed.

The task force has prioritized funding medical training on addiction for physicians and providing "addiction fellowships" for the state's rural hospital training program. In addition, the task force is recommending providing grants to 25 hospitals that treat high rates of drug overdoses. The grants would be used to hire recovery coaches to help patients transition between inpatient and outpatient care.

It also is recommending funding three new medically

Wisconsin Trends

GENDER

Rates of opioid overdose are higher among men than women.

AGE

For men, opioid overdoses are highest among those ages 25 to 34. For women, opioid overdoses are highest among those ages 35 to 54.

OPIOID TREATMENT

Hospital visits involving opioid acute poisoning (including overdose) increased from 25.3 to 52 per 100,000 from 2006 to 2014.

HEROIN TREATMENT

Hospital visits involving heroin increased from 2.6 to 17.4 per 100,000 from 2006 to 2014.

Source: 2017 Wisconsin Department of Health Services report

She advocates for sober houses and recovery communities.

"I do all of this work to give back. So many people in recovery I know do the same thing," she says. "When you invest in one person's recovery, you get that back 100 times — putting families back together, less crime."

She tells clients about the snake.

"The first time you use (an opioid), it works amazingly well. Over time, it works less well. That diminishes until you're in a place way darker than where you started."

She tells them what happened to their brains. "We know the brain science behind addiction. The brain has been hijacked. Using feels like the thing you need to survive," she says.

And so users do bad things. "Not because they're bad people, but because they're desperate to survive. I very much believe that the public doesn't get that. But it's hard to let go of that anger toward people with addiction, because they did do those bad things when their brain was hijacked."

She tells them about healthy coping skills, things that take a great investment in time but pay off in big ways — yoga, deep breathing, meditation. "The first time you use them, they barely work at all," she says. "But they actually gain power the more you use them."

She tells them, too, that the snake will be there, in some form, always.

"It takes the brain two years to heal after addiction to opioids. So for the first two years, it's difficult," she says. "You get cravings. And after that, you still get cravings once in a while."

And for her? She works with a doctor to manage her pain with medications that are much less addictive.

Every once in a while, she gets the expected craving. But then she thinks, " 'I'm a mom. I have two kids.' ... When you love your life and you have the time away from using, it becomes a second-long craving, and it is such an easy choice to decide that there is no way that you would give up everything you love to use again." **WI**

Jan Uebelherr is a freelance editor and writer in Milwaukee. She was a Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reporter for more than 30 years.



Opioid crisis taking a toll on rural Wisconsin

By Mike Nichols and Jan Uebelherr

Sure, there are addicts who get hooked the way people always have — by hanging out with the wrong crowd and starting with alcohol or maybe a little pot in high school, perhaps doing coke at a party as a teenager and eventually moving on to something even more ensnaring.

Then there are the addicts who, as Erik Sutton says, “cannot believe they are in that position.”

These are the Wisconsinites, often over age 30, who became addicted to medications they were prescribed to treat a debilitating pain or ailment, and who then moved on to something cheaper and more plentiful. Like heroin.

“Just coming off of it — just the withdrawal — can be fatal,” says Sutton, a battalion chief with the Superior Fire Department.

Superior and the surrounding area have been inundated with opioids in recent years. Law enforcement in Douglas County, which includes Superior, reportedly seized more than 460 grams of heroin in 2016 — 459 more than just five years earlier. The county had the most heroin submissions to the state crime lab per capita, the Sheriff’s Department has said.

Instead of just heart attacks and accidents, the Superior Fire Department finds itself responding time and again to drug overdoses. Typically, says Sutton, the department might respond to “one or two or three a week, maybe.” But “when a new batch comes into town, we will know instantly because we will go on two or three (overdose calls) a day.”

“It ebbs and flows,” he says. “It goes in cycles. What we have noticed is it goes in about an eight- or 10-week cycle, and what happens is a new batch of product comes into the area at a much higher potency.”

He uses an analogy that most Wisconsinites can better relate to.

“If you’re used to drinking a stein of beer and then fill it up with vodka, it will be a whole lot different afternoon.”

Dealers come up from the Twin Cities or Chicago and rent

a room someplace for a week, parcel out the drugs, make a killing — sometimes literally — and then hit the road. Sutton and his team pick up the pieces. Or the bodies.

They carry Narcan — a nasal spray used to treat opioid overdose — and it saves lives, usually.

“You know, the truth is we have had 40-year-olds who have passed away from an overdose, and we have had 16-year-olds and everything in between. The one that most sticks out in my mind is a 28-year-old female whose young daughter was in the next room crying, and we did everything we could. But she was gone.”

Easy access to prescriptions

There are similar tragedies in smaller cities, as well as bigger ones, all across Wisconsin — and prescription drugs are often a part of the story.

Caroline Miller, who grew up in Platteville, says she briefly became addicted to opioids while in college after having her wisdom teeth removed.

“I didn’t think about the consequences,” she says. “I kept getting (Vicodin) from the dentist for a few months. I’m not sure why exactly they kept refilling my prescription.” Miller, 35, is now an outreach specialist at Wisconsin Voices for Recovery at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a volunteer with Connections Counseling in Madison.

Kim Hurd, 54, used recreational drugs in her 20s in a small town in northern Illinois but didn’t get hooked on Vicodin until she was 32 and had just given birth to her first child. It was

a long labor, and she was given the drug while still in the hospital.

“I was just so high. It felt just fantastic,” she says. “I got up and took a shower, put makeup on and went down to the gift store.”

“I remember sitting in the maternity ward nursing my baby while high as a kite.” Her daughter had minor complications and stayed in the hospital. So did Hurd — and they kept giving her Vicodin. She left with a prescription for it.



“I’m not sure why exactly they kept refilling my prescription.”

— Caroline Miller

**“I remember sitting
in the maternity
ward nursing my
baby while high
as a kite.”**

— Kim Hurd



“It’s an absolute feeling of relief, of just feeling good. When that euphoric feeling comes over you and you feel awesome and all problems go away and you can do anything, you’re able to cope with anything that comes at you.”

The drug wasn’t hard to get. Hurd is allergic to ibuprofen, so if she injured her back or had menstrual cramps, she got Vicodin. She got it with a prescription, but if she needed more, she had a steady and easily accessible supply — tenants of some properties that she and her then-husband owned in the Rockford area.

Things got much worse over the years before she found a way to get better, entered rehab in 2007 and moved to the Madison area, where she works at Connections Counseling, in addition to another job.

There is no geographic refuge. In fact, the smaller towns farther north can be even more enticing to dealers than Chicago, the Twin Cities or Detroit, according to Sutton. Superior, Duluth and the once-isolated hamlets of northern Minnesota — Cloquet, Hermantown, Proctor — are at the top of what he calls a triangle. Drug flows north from two directions. The dealers go where they find profits.

There are many recovery stories — and policy changes aimed at making them possible. But Sutton isn’t particularly sanguine. Not yet anyway.

“I have not seen that the tide is turning,” he says. “It’s all supply and demand. With the opioid epidemic, which started for the most part with prescription medications, I don’t see it going away.” **WI**

Mike Nichols is WPRI president. Jan Uebelherr is a freelance editor and writer in Milwaukee.

assisted treatment centers in underserved parts of the state to offer both behavioral and medical treatment, which includes access to an opioid substitute. The use of opioid substitutes greatly reduces the probability of relapse.

The role of the FDA

It is also worthwhile to examine policies and laws regarding access and Food and Drug Administration regulation. In the case of Suboxone — a combination of buprenorphine and naloxone used to treat opioid addiction — ill-conceived patent laws and regulations have contributed to a narrow market and artificially inflated prices.

In 2010, drug maker Indivior voluntarily recalled Suboxone before its FDA-granted exclusivity period was up and replaced the tablet with a medically unchanged product — a strip that dissolves on the tongue — for which the FDA granted additional years of exclusivity.

This change has led to a range of problems. In Wisconsin and elsewhere, the strip became a popular contraband in prisons, as it is exceedingly easy to con-

Prescription Opioids

The most common drugs involved in prescription opioid overdose deaths include:

Methadone

Oxycodone, such as OxyContin

Hydrocodone, such as Vicodin

- Nearly half of all U.S. opioid overdose deaths involve a prescription.
- In 2015, more than 15,000 people died from overdoses involving prescription opioids in the United States.

Among those who died from prescription opioid overdose from 1999 to 2014:

AGE

Overdose rates were highest among people ages 25 to 54.

RACE

Overdose rates were higher among non-Hispanic whites and American Indian or Alaskan natives, compared to non-Hispanic blacks and Hispanics.

GENDER

Men were more likely to die from overdose, but the mortality gap between men and women is closing.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

ceal. Trying to prevent smuggling has increased personnel costs. What's more, the inflated price costs the state millions of dollars in higher Medicaid expenses.

Reforming FDA regulations to prevent companies from making medically insignificant changes to a product merely to extend patent protection and suppress competition would open the market to more varied and affordable options for addicts, while also saving governments money.

But the state does not need to wait for the FDA to act. The Wisconsin Medicaid Pharmacy Prior Authorization Advisory Committee, slated to meet in May, could choose to follow the lead of Maryland and other states that replaced Suboxone with a less-problematic drug. Since Maryland switched to Zubsolv tablets last year, smuggling of such drugs into jails and prisons has fallen 41 percent.

Wisconsin Attorney General Brad Schimel is tackling the problem by leading the 42-state antitrust lawsuit against the makers of Suboxone — Indivior and MonoSol Rx — for “illegal product hopping,” while his Dose of Reality campaign launched in 2015 is increasing awareness about prescription painkiller abuse.

Apart from government action, medical innovation may help alleviate opioid addiction. In May 2016, Pfizer and Eli Lilly announced that by 2018, they will seek FDA approval for a new type of pain reliever that could be a substitute for opioids. The drug, tanezumab, could be used to treat osteoarthritis, chronic back pain and pain related to cancer without being addictive.

The medicine has demonstrated meaningful efficacy when compared with a placebo and commonly used pain medications, and has shown to be more effective at treating pain than oxycodone. Investing in the development of substitutes and encouraging the FDA to approve such drugs in a timely fashion could yield substantial benefits.

Baby steps to a long-term solution

It is hard to see the opioid epidemic easing in the near future. The major factors that have contributed to the rise

of opioid addiction seem unlikely to change anytime soon.

But what can change — and has — are the government's actions. At this nascent stage of combating the opioid problem, we have some hope that what has been done will bear fruit in the near future.

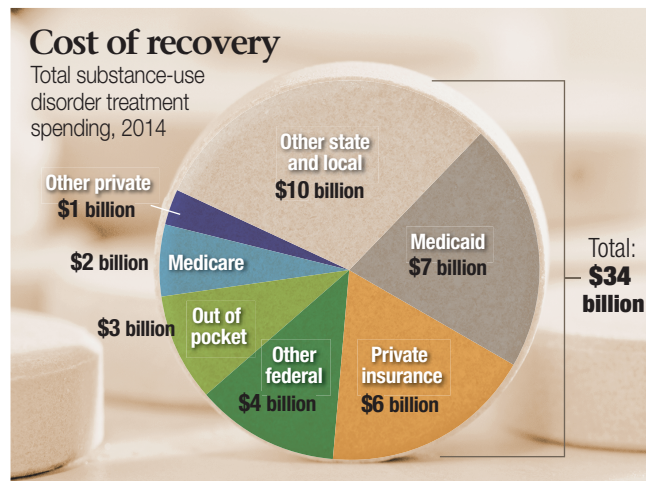
Wisconsin has had success combating unhealthy behaviors in the recent past. Twenty years ago, nearly 25 percent of all adults in the state smoked tobacco, and the number of premature deaths here due to smoking was (and remains) higher than the number of deaths due to opioid abuse. Today, one-third fewer people in the state smoke tobacco, a seismic shift due largely to higher taxes on cigarettes and a statewide ban on indoor smoking, which changed

the culture of smoking. These reforms benefit taxpayers as well as the health of thousands of Wisconsinites.

However, the scourge of opioid abuse on our rural communities is of a different sort altogether. These days, Caldwell observed, the oxycodone epidemic “has joined shuttered factories and Donald Trump as a symbol of white working-class desperation and fecklessness.” Its prevalence has resulted in a decline in life expectancy for white, working-class Americans for the first time since the government began keeping records of such things.

An effective solution for the opioid epidemic must tackle both supply and demand by making it more difficult for people to acquire the drugs as well as reforming the coarsening culture that envelops poor rural communities and inner cities. For these residents, a dearth of jobs and a lack of access to a quality education make it difficult to succeed in today's economy and leave many disillusioned and in search of something else.

Addressing both the supply and demand in Wisconsin's opioid crisis seems like a daunting task, but we have no choice but to try. **WI**



Source: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Ike Brannon is president of Capital Policy Analytics in Washington, D.C., and a visiting fellow at the Cato Institute. Deborah Goldman is an assistant editor at National Affairs.

UW professor
spent six
years listening
to rural
Wisconsin
residents
express their
frustrations

Rural resentment

laid bare

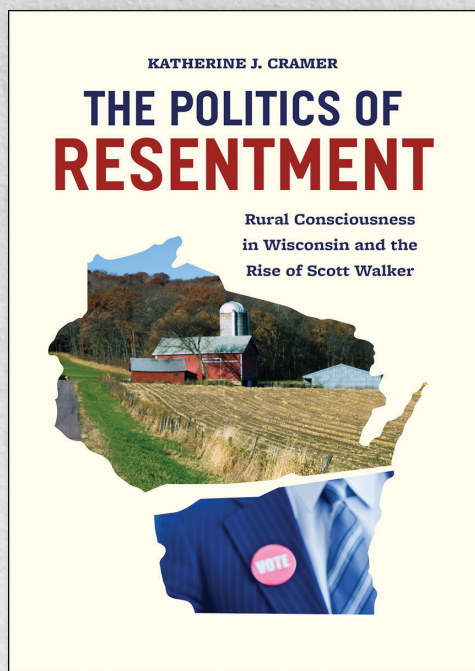
Madison — If all of us learned to listen to each other the way Kathy Cramer does, it would go a long way toward healing the political wounds and shutting off the hateful language that both liberals and conservatives claim to abhor.

Kathy Cramer traveled the state to research her book, which has taken on added relevance since the 2016 election.

ALLEN FREDRICKSON PHOTO

ON THE
FRONTLINES
OF REFORM

by Sunny Schubert



From *The Politics of Resentment*:

So on this particular glorious morning, I am in Henry's dairy barn while the cows are getting milked. I am in what I call my "nondescript fieldwork clothes," an outfit that is intentionally professional but not too fancy — nice pants and a button-down short-sleeved shirt, with decent sandals, all in darkish but not black colors (navy blue, basically). Like I said, it is not too fancy, and yet I am mindful that cow poop is splattering up from the cement onto my toes. The farmers and the others in the barn chuckle a little as they notice me grimace.

Henry introduces me to several family members working in the barn. I have told Henry and his brother I am a faculty member at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and given them my business card each of the four other times I have visited with their dice group over the past five years. But they have a different interpretation. "Here's a politician, up from Madison," Henry says as he introduces me. "Oh I am not a politician," I say as I laugh. "I'm here to get the wisdom of people around here on recent events in the state."

A man working with the milking machines looks around the back of the cow at me and says, "I'm glad Walker did what he did. It's about time someone takes something away from those bastards."

The bastards, in this case, are public employees. I am one of them.

Or, everybody could just read Cramer's 2016 book *The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker*.

Do not be put off by the title. The book is not an anti-Walker polemic, though one might expect that given that the author is a University of Wisconsin-Madison political science professor.

Instead, the book is Cramer's search to discover not just what residents of rural Wisconsin think about politics but how they reach their conclusions.

Her work gained even more relevance after many of those residents turned Wisconsin into a red state for the first time since 1984 and helped elect President Donald Trump.

Cramer's study eschewed the use of so-called scientific polling data. Given how inaccurate the 2016 presidential polls proved to be, it was a wise choice.

As she writes in the book: "Politicians with small constituencies or limited budgets figure out what their constituents think and feel — public opinion — based on things other than polls. They talk to people. They do 'polling by walking around.' I am trying to revive this definition of public opinion as more than just what polls measure. It is also the understandings that emerge from communication among people."

So in 2007, instead of mailing questionnaires or hiring a telephone polling firm, Cramer began traveling repeatedly to talk with 39 groups of people in 27 communities across Wisconsin, most of them in rural areas. She continued those visits for about six years.

"I was very interested in social class identity: where people perceive themselves to be in the pecking order and how that affects their politics,"

Cramer, who grew up in Grafton, explains in an interview. "Also, I love Wisconsin, and I'm always looking for a good excuse to drive around this fabulous state."

The result of her "walking around" research is a book that is profoundly respectful of the rural residents.

Cramer writes almost nothing about politicians and right-wing media stars, the groups Thomas Frank's *What's the Matter With Kansas?* (2004) blames for turning Kansas into a red state.

Instead, she focuses on actual voters. She does not see rural Wisconsinites as



“I did not find them to be racist, homophobic, anti-immigrant, misogynistic or whatever other labels are being thrown around these days. These are good people.”

– Kathy Cramer, referring to rural residents

“a population that needs to be ‘fixed.’ ”

“I did not find them to be racist, homophobic, anti-immigrant, misogynistic or whatever other labels are being thrown around these days,” she says.

“These are good people. I don’t buy into (Frank’s concept that) people are voting against their interests or that people are stupid.”

The divide manifested

When Cramer began her research, she had no idea that Scott Walker, then Milwaukee County executive, would become governor in 2010, nor that just weeks into his first term he would propose the politically polarizing Act 10.

That legislation dramatically reduced the political power of public employees, including teachers, throughout the state. It also forced many of them to contribute more to their health insurance premiums and retirement plans.

In liberal enclaves like Madison and Milwaukee, the outrage was palpable. But in rural communities, Cramer reports, yard signs and bumper stickers supporting the governor were prevalent.

And that’s where the resentment comes in. The rural residents Cramer talked with want smaller government because they resent big government.

They believe the tax dollars they send to Madison rarely return to benefit their own communities. They believe that public employees make too much money and don’t work as hard as rural people do. “They shower before work, not afterwards,” she recounts in the book about rural residents’ views of university employees.

The residents also believe their values and opinions are ignored or disrespected. When these feelings combine, they lead to a simmering resentment very similar to simple class-consciousness but rooted in geography — in a sense of place.

As Cramer writes:

“I had to contend with the common perception that visitors from

Madison usually parachute in and pronounce what is right and good and then leave without respecting local wisdom, wants or needs. ...

“The complaints I heard in rural areas were not simply distrust of government — people in rural areas often perceived that government was particularly dismissive of the concerns of people in rural communities ...

“Many people talked about this as part and parcel of a fundamental aspect of the rural-versus-urban divide: City people just don’t seem to get it. They don’t understand rural life or pay attention to it.

“When pundits look at low-income residents in Republican areas and exclaim that they are voting against their interests, they are often assuming that somehow the Republican Party has fooled people into not noticing that they are opposing the very kind of government programs that might help them out.

“But those kinds of claims neglect that a ‘safety net’ may not translate as ‘help’ to everyone. In rural areas, there is a great deal of pride in the idea that ‘help’ is about letting people work hard enough so that they can make it on their own.

“The sense I got from these conversations is that help, for many, is about providing jobs, not welfare. When (one man) told me he had never missed a day of work, and he did it ‘working in the woods,’ he said it with pride.

“To him, rural life is tough, but he drew a good deal of esteem from claiming that he was a person who was living that life.”

Lessons for both parties

Cramer does not spare criticism of politicians, particularly Republicans, who tap into rural resentment. She noted that during his 2010 gubernatorial campaign, Walker demonized proposed high-speed rail between Madison and Milwaukee as something most residents of the state would never ride.

From *The Politics of Resentment*:

I heard people in rural areas say many times that all of the major decisions are made in the urban areas, by urban people, and dictated outward. They complained that authority flowed out from Madison and Milwaukee but never in reverse. They felt that they did not have the power to get people to listen to their concerns.

While the inability to get their concerns heard is a subtle instance of feeling powerless, it is nonetheless important. Power is partly about respect, recognition and listening. People whose voices are never heard by decision-makers have no power. When those in power listen to some group, they convey that they are worthy of attention and, implicitly, that they share their power.

Many of the people I spent time with in rural areas felt like their towns were drying up and blowing away because the spigot of resources had been turned off. In addition, though, there was also a sense that these more subtle forms of power had been denied them as well.

She also says: "To be blunt, conservative politicians encourage people to focus on the undeserving as a way to achieve their goal of limiting government without harming the interests of the wealthy."

But she also worries that Democratic politicians continue to miss the point. Since last November's election, she says, she has been asked about her findings many times, mostly by Democrats.

"In my turn, as a UW-Madison professor and as director of the Morgridge Center for Public Service, I am very consciously not a political consultant. I have reached out to Republicans to say the Democrats want this meeting. My job is to help us all to better connect with the people we're representing.

"Democrats asking for advice on how to connect with rural voters — well, there's various ways you can take it," she says. "Why do they think they need to learn from me? Haven't they been

hanging out in coffee shops and gas stations, actually talking to people? And if not, why not?"

Cramer worries that some Democratic politicians at both the state and national levels with whom she has spoken think too little about how to actually solve the problems facing rural residents and think too much about how to simply "rework" their message to assuage or attract rural voters.

So instead of pondering ways to improve the jobs situation, for example, or to keep gas prices low (rural residents drive an average of 40 percent more than city dwellers), some Democrats' only takeaway from Cramer's work is that Hillary Clinton should have campaigned more in Wisconsin.

For the average audience, *The Politics of Resentment* is no beach-chair book. Both the introductory chapters and the conclusion will strike some readers as filled with academic jargon. In Cramer's defense, her book is meant as a work of scholarship, not an appeal to armchair observers.

But the middle of the book is lively, filled with verbatim conversations, joking, friendly banter and amusing anecdotes. Readers can picture themselves hanging out in the gas stations, corner stores, diners and church basements of the North Woods, drinking coffee, playing dice and eavesdropping.

"Why do (Democrats) think they need to learn from me? Haven't they been hanging out in coffee shops and gas stations, actually talking to people? And if not, why not?" – Kathy Cramer



Academic researchers, including Cramer herself, “could always do better as public servants in connecting with the people,” she says.

“Some of us need to learn that people who don’t have Ph.D.s can still teach us a lot. Maybe people on campus aren’t aware of just how much people (in rural areas) would like it if we said, ‘Here’s what I’m up to in your community.’ Given that we don’t know each other, we don’t know how much we could learn from each other,” she adds.

Since the book came out, Cramer has been busy breaking down her conclusions for the mainstream media, writing for publications ranging from *Scientific American* to *USA Today*.

She has spoken to dozens of campus groups, in addition to fielding questions from politicians and journalists here and abroad.

Many “coastal elites,” she says, acknowledge that they have no idea what people here in flyover country are thinking.

She also has been following up with some of the rural residents who helped her write the book to ask what they think of President Trump.

“A lot of people whom I genuinely admire and think of as intelligent, caring, compassionate people really didn’t like Hillary Clinton,” she says.

“They also didn’t like some of the things Trump said or the way he behaved, but they really, really wanted change.”

Realistically, however, “They’re not actually expecting him to change their lives,” she adds. “They’re hoping he will cut back on the flow of resources to groups they see as undeserving, like immigrants, but they’re actually not expecting anyone to bring a higher standard of life to their communities,” she says.

“They do express some sense that if the economy picks up, their lives might improve. A lot of these folks are really struggling,” she says, adding that many urban residents, too, are challenged economically.

On this front anyway, low-income people, both urban and rural, share a belief, she says: “ ‘Government is not paying attention to people like me. Our political system doesn’t work for me.’ ” [WI](#)

Sunny Schubert is a Monona freelance writer and former editorial writer for the Wisconsin State Journal.

From **The Politics of Resentment:**

When people perceived that rural life was economically tough, this carried with it many complaints: about the injustice in the distribution of public dollars, unfair taxation and more. Those complaints were intertwined with other aspects of rural consciousness, in particular, with their sense of being ignored and disrespected and of having fundamentally different values and lifestyles than city dwellers.

Here is a common narrative for how people wove these perceptions together: Rural life was a source of pride for many because it was different from urban living — it involved different lifestyles and values, including a special emphasis on hard work. That rural hard work ethic was a point of pride, but for many, it was a problem because in order to work hard, you needed a job, and rural communities were on the short end of the stick in terms of jobs. Why? Because rural communities had no power. Politicians and others with the ability to make the decisions to bring good-paying jobs to their communities paid no attention to their places.

In the rural communities I visited, I often heard people stating, as though a matter of fact, that jobs, wealth and taxpayer dollars are in the “the M&Ms,” as people sometimes referred to Madison and Milwaukee. They complained that rural areas are being left on their own to fight a losing battle. Conversations in 17 of the 25 groups outside the Madison and Milwaukee areas included statements conveying that their communities did not receive their fair share of resources and that metro residents did not understand this. Their comments conveyed that the rural-versus-urban distinction was the main way to characterize the distribution of taxation, wealth and the cost of goods and services in the state. In short, many people in small towns perceived that their tax dollars are “sucked in” by Madison and spent on that city or Milwaukee, never to be seen again.

MIKE NICHOLS



Licensure run amok

*Our government is killing jobs
and thwarting business creation*

Krissy Hudack bought a little business in a small, northern Wisconsin town where most folks don't make a lot of money — a hair salon that is an integral part of the community. The only problem: The manager moved on not long after that, and our state bureaucrats told Krissy she wasn't good enough to run her own salon.

They told her that in addition to her cosmetologist license, she would have to put in 2,000 hours of practical training at another salon — in her case, that was a half-hour away in Ashland — and complete 150 hours of coursework plus pass a manager's exam in Eau Claire if she wanted to manage her own business. She'd already put in over 1,500 training hours

and passed an exam for her cosmetologist license.

Krissy says it's robbery, though not the kind you can call the cops about. Instead, she left Iron River in Bayfield County at 4:30 a.m. one recent day and drove five hours to the state Capitol to ask lawmakers on the Senate Committee on Public Benefits, Licensing & State-Federal Relations to please just leave her alone.

Amen to that. But she's not the only one.

**We spend a lot
of time in this
state wondering
how to create
opportunity.
How about just
not destroying it?**

Cassie Mrotek of Milwaukee spent \$16,000 and a year of her life getting a certificate from a cosmetology school in Florida, which required 1,200 hours of training, before moving back to her home state of Wisconsin to pursue her dreams — only to be told by our leaders in Madison that she's not good enough for us, either.

She has to jump through all of Wisconsin's licensing hoops before we'll let her contribute to our society, pay taxes and make this a better place.

I kid you not.



ALLEN FREDRICKSON PHOTO

WPRI President Mike Nichols and Iron River salon owner Krissy Hudack testify before the Senate Committee on Public Benefits, Licensing & State-Federal Relations on April 6 at the Capitol in Madison.

Forget Krissy and Cassie for a moment. Let's look at the absurdity of the bigger picture.

We have a skills drain and a brain drain in key parts of Wisconsin. In metro Milwaukee in 2015-'16, net domestic out-migration — that's the number of people moving out of an area to someplace else in the United States in comparison to the number moving in from elsewhere — was over 11,000 people, according to Brookings Institute statistics. Many of those people go from the Snow Belt — places like Wisconsin — to the Sun Belt — places like Florida.

So here we have just one person dying to come back and be productive and work, and we're essentially saying, "Nah. Not you. We don't want you."

We spend a lot of time in this state wondering how to create opportunity. How about just not destroying it?

At WPRI, we're with Cassie and Krissy. We're trying to get lawmakers to scale back on nonsensical licensure requirements that prevent people like them from working and building businesses.

As we pointed out in a recent paper, "Occupational Licensing in Wisconsin: Who are We Really Protecting?" — part of our report, "Government's Love for Licensure" — the mandates ostensibly exist to protect the public from health hazards. This is entirely appropriate in some instances. Some.

I'm all for requiring my doctor to get a license before she can wield her scalpel. I'm not so worried about being permanently damaged by the person who cuts my hair. If a bad haircut were a danger to a person's health, my dad would have been locked up 45 years ago for the lousy crew cuts he inflicted upon me.

State licensing is out of control. A thorough reading of the Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services database yields 207 different licensed occupations. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection lists an additional 140 categories for licensed professional activities.

Want to try your hand at being an auctioneer, landscape architect or interior designer? Want to give manicures to your neighbors and maybe earn some spending money on the side? Want to just grow and sell Christmas trees? Not so fast. Not in this state. The bureaucrats have a job to do first — even if you don't.

They like to say they're working to protect the people. But far too often, the people they're protecting already have jobs and just don't want competition. We know this is true because we went through a bunch of complaints to the Department of Safety and Professional Services (*see story at left*), and they often come from people who already have a license, who were forced to jump through the state's hoops and who want to make sure others have to do the same.

We don't need all these protections. We need reform. Long term, we need the Occupational Licensing Review

Council suggested by Gov. Scott Walker to take a hard look at every licensing requirement. But first, this spring, we need legislators to get rid of regulations targeting people like Krissy and Cassie.

There are lots of reasons — but maybe one is enough. What our government is doing to them is not fair. [WI](#)

Mike Nichols is the president of WPRI.

Complaints often have nothing to do with safety concerns

By Jan Uebelherr

Often, complaints to state regulators are lodged by licensed professionals who don't take kindly to those who don't play by the rules — even stay-at-home moms who just want to do nails for fun and company and maybe a little extra income.

"Ladies! You deserve a manicure!" wrote the enthusiastic Cumberland mom who posted her pitch, along with photos showing her handiwork, on an "online rummage sale" page offering her services. She noted that she was not licensed or formally trained.

"Want to get your nails all done up but don't have the money for a salon? Let me help. I'm a stay-at-home mom looking for something →

Complaints: They often are filed by competitors

to do and people to talk to. I'm skilled, but non-professional, nail tech. I can do anything from a basic manicure to full acrylics, including fun paint and/or designs. I do this out of my home for fun and hopefully a little extra cash for the household. Donations vary depending on what you would like done. Let me know if you're interested, I'll be waiting to hear from you."

She did hear from someone. In February 2016, a complaint was filed by email with the Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services: "I think you need to inform this young lady that she needs to be licensed."

The complainant was not identified, but complainants are frequently competitors.

"This practice undermines the properly licensed auctioneers of this region and impacts our ability to compete and earn a living."

— Complainant writing to the state about an unlicensed auctioneer



For instance, several auctioneers operating in Wisconsin have been the target of complaints by other auctioneers about licensing.

In one case, two complaints were filed in 2015 against a Sparta man over running an online auction site without a license.

One complaint apparently was filed by a licensed auctioneer, who claimed that the Sparta man violated statutes by auctioning property held for less than one year.

"This practice undermines the properly licensed auctioneers of this region and impacts our ability to compete and earn a living," the complainant wrote, adding that the man in question "is not licensed and those of us who are should seek action from the state to protect our investment in business and our profession."

The second complaint, filed anonymously, claimed that the man "is illegally acting as an auctioneer. ... Please investigate."

In another case, two complaints were filed against a



Green Lake County auction house. In both cases, in 2015 and 2016, the complainants alleged that the operators were not properly licensed.

That was the case as well with a Green Bay barber-shop that was the target of a complaint filed in April 2015, apparently by someone who was licensed.

"I feel that everyone should have to go to school like all other professionals as myself and others," the complainant wrote.

Jan Uebelherr is a freelance editor and writer in Milwaukee.

For more on licensure reform

VIDEOS:

- Scan these codes with your smartphone using a QR code reader app.

Krissy Hudack's story: Cassie Mrotek's story:



- See both videos at wpri.org – click on the Multimedia tab.

STORIES:

To read Krissy Hudack's and Cassie Mrotek's stories, go to wpri.org and click on the Commentary tab.

REPORT:

To read WPRI's "Government's Love for Licensure," go to wpri.org and click on the Reports tab.





Conservatives must keep their eyes on the prize

By Richard Esenberg

Conservatives are still fighting the battle of **#NeverTrump**. I'd like to suggest a truce.

On the one hand, some of us believe that Donald Trump's 2016 nomination and eventual victory require a process of confession and reconciliation. Conservatives, in this view, have been corrupted by tribalism and an unwillingness to leave a cognitive bubble that prevented them from seeing

Trump for what he was. The cost was an abandonment of principle to personality. These conservatives worry that, in defending Trump's every tweet and in conforming to the twists and turns of his policy portfolio, we are doubling down on a losing hand.

I'm not entirely unsympathetic. Putting aside his personal foibles, candidate Trump presented himself, in many respects, as the antithesis of the freedom movement's

We should resist the temptation to use Washington to dictate policies in the states.

core beliefs. Making peace with him ought to have been an uneasy and tentative thing. Conservatives who supported Trump with less reservation ought to have understood that. They should not be blind to the dangers to conservatism presented by his presidency.

But others believe that the opportunities presented by a president who is at least open — and sometimes committed — to conservative reform should not be squandered. I was a vociferous anti-Trumper but eventually came to believe that a vote for him offered a chance at avoiding — or at least slowing — the movement to post-constitutionalism and a permanent politics of grievance and cronyism that certainly would have accompanied a Hillary Clinton presidency.

In my judgment, this chance justified what I freely acknowledge to be the serious downside risk — for both conservatives and the nation — of a President Trump. People like me acted on principle in spite of personality.

What comes next?

This ought to point to the path forward. This is not the time for conservatives to argue about whether people like me were right but to do what we can to make us right. That requires keeping our eyes on the prize.

The point of politics is not to aggrandize individuals. I don't support Republicans out of a rooting interest or as a matter of partisan identity. I do it because I believe that it is generally the best way to advance the ideas that I believe in and that I hope will make my country a better place to live. The GOP is not the end; it is a means.

If that is so, our support for this president — or, for that matter, any other — will always be tentative and conditional. We did not elect him to honor the House of Trump but to move the country in a particular way. We need to applaud what he does right and criticize what he does wrong. Our support needs to be coupled with our advice. Trump needs to be shown the right thing to do.

Let me suggest a few things to keep in mind:

Get the rules right. Gov. Scott Walker made a great beginning in his letter urging the then-president-elect to restore competitive federalism and right the imbalance of power between the federal government and the states. Now

that Republicans control the federal government, our task ought to be not to weaponize it but to tame it. We should resist the temptation to use Washington to dictate policies in the states.

In addition to restoring the limits on federal power, we should rein in the administrative state and restore the balance of power in Washington itself. Having a Republican president should be the occasion for restoring the prerogatives and duties of Congress. It ought not simply be an occasion for making law through executive orders we like.

Freedom still matters. Trump's success made us aware of the frustrations of the middle class, who have not been

well-served by Democrats' identity politics. We cannot simply assume that lower taxes will cure all ills. But we need to make sure that our response is not a return to the failed policies of Keynesian economics and shortsighted protectionism. Browbeating businesses and picking winners and losers are just as wrong when Republicans do so as when Democrats are the offenders. We should spend money on infrastructure only if we need

infrastructure and not as a jobs program. It remains the difficult task of conservatives to be honest about the limitations of government.

We need to ensure that regulation and taxes do not distort markets and initiative while making sure that government interventions respect choice and use the power of markets.

The facts — and civility — count. In all of this, we need to avoid the temptation to confuse a lack of rigor about the facts and respect for civility as wisdom or explain it away as “three-dimensional chess.” We need to understand that belligerence is not synonymous with strength and nuance is not weakness.

Conservatism — or at least its freedom wing — has never been a populist movement. We need to be willing to make common cause with the Trump administration when we can. But we should never be seduced by it.

The election is over. The real work now begins. [WI](#)



Richard Esenberg is president of the Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty. He blogs at sharkandshepherd.blogspot.com.