

# Public Policy Forum and Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance: Organizations to merge

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Milwaukee and Madison, Wisconsin – The Public Policy Forum (PPF) and the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance (WISTAX) announced today the merger of their two organizations. The new organization will offer increased staff capacity, broader research capabilities, and an enhanced platform to better engage and inform policymakers, citizens, taxpayers, the media, and others.

“For more than 85 years, our respective organizations have shared a mission of providing informed, nonpartisan analysis of the critical policy issues affecting our economy and quality of life,” said Todd Berry, President of the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance. “The new organization will be resolutely committed to our shared values and areas of expertise, which will be evident in everything we do.”

Researchers at the new group will continue to focus on issues important to state government, local government, schools, Metro Milwaukee, and Wisconsin’s economy. They will also continue to provide impartial data and analysis to enable

government leaders and the public to make informed decisions.

“By merging the tradition and expertise of these two nationally recognized groups, we aim to create the most effective independent policy research organization in the country,” added Rob Henken, President of the Public Policy Forum. “Never before has the need for greater efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability in our state and local governments and school districts been more important. Together, we can be a stronger voice to examine, analyze, and inform on behalf of Wisconsin citizens.”

With offices in Milwaukee and Madison, the organization will include 11 full-time staff. Among the many benefits of the merger include greater policy acumen, research capacity, and organizational efficiency. In particular, combining the experience and skills of two award-winning research staffs will enhance both productivity and quality, allowing them to:

- Actively monitor and analyze trends in state and local government and school district finances, and use their expanded capacity to promote collaboration, efficiency, and other “best practices.”
- Conduct more in-depth studies of major state and local fiscal and public policy issues.
- Employ a wider range of communication tools to educate the public about state and local government operations and challenges.
- Promote civics education, citizen engagement, and increased public participation in state and local government.

Both organizations’ governing bodies unanimously endorsed the merger. A new executive committee will be formed, comprised of equal representation from each previous organization. Current PPF President Rob Henken will serve as the new organization’s president, while current WISTAX Research Director Dale Knapp will serve as research director. WISTAX President Todd Berry will continue to advise the team as the merger is finalized and then plans to retire.

“We are grateful to Todd for his insight, expertise, and leadership of WISTAX over the past 24 years,” said Thomas Spero, Chairman of the Board of the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance. “We are extremely confident in Rob’s future leadership of our combined organization.”

“We are very excited to combine the policy expertise of our outstanding team of

researchers with the skills and experience of Dale Knapp and his team,” added Andrew Schiesl, Chairman of the Public Policy Forum’s Board of Trustees. “All of our mutual stakeholders will benefit from the new and improved research products this partnership will produce.”

The merger announcement drew bipartisan praise from state and Milwaukee elected leaders.

“When I served as Milwaukee County Executive, I developed a strong appreciation for the insights and objectivity the Forum brings to Metro Milwaukee policy deliberations, and as a former legislator and now Governor I have always appreciated the similar role WISTAX has played for state government,” said Governor Scott Walker. “Combining the rich traditions of the two organizations can only be a positive development for the citizens of Wisconsin.”

“The Forum and WISTAX have shown citizens in Milwaukee and across Wisconsin that facts matter, and that data should drive government policies and action,” added Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele. “A merged policy research organization with enhanced capacity and added resources should be able to drive that point home in an even more compelling and thorough manner.”

“The Forum’s work on Milwaukee’s fiscal and policy challenges has enhanced the quality of decision-making at our City Hall, and WISTAX’s work at the state level has brought important data and information to the fingertips of municipal officials throughout Wisconsin,” said Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett. “I look forward to seeing the contributions of these respected nonpartisan organizations expand when they come together as one.”

Legal work to establish the merger will be completed by the end of the year, while other work, including a new name, will occur in 2018. For more information, visit [publicpolicyforum.org/ppf-wistax-merger](http://publicpolicyforum.org/ppf-wistax-merger) or [wistax.org](http://wistax.org).

### **[About the Public Policy Forum \(PPF\)](#)**

PPF was created in 1913 with a mission of promoting principles of efficiency in Milwaukee’s city government. Over the years, its mission expanded to focus on research and analysis involving the wide range of public policy issues facing local governments and school districts in southeast Wisconsin.

### **[About the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance \(WISTAX\)](#)**

WISTAX was established in 1932 and is dedicated to nonpartisan, nonprofit public policy research and citizen education. WISTAX's objective research has provided citizens, the media, and public officials with accurate, unbiased information about the workings of Wisconsin state and local government.

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