

Wisconsin Policy Research Institute: WPRI is now the Badger Institute

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On its 30th anniversary, institute announces new, ambitious tax policy initiative, new magazine, fellows program and statewide events

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The Wisconsin Policy Research Institute, the state's oldest free-market think tank, has changed its name to the [Badger Institute](#) and announced a number of ambitious new initiatives — including a comprehensive review of the state's tax policy. (Watch [video](#) featuring state luminaries discussing the institute's impact and influence.)

The new name and logo were [unveiled](#) Oct. 17 at the institute's 30th Anniversary Dinner and will be introduced to Badger State residents in two dozen events throughout Wisconsin this fall and winter.

WPRI was founded in 1987 as a nonpartisan, nonprofit institute to provide research and promote public policies that contribute to Wisconsin's growth and prosperity. While that vision has not changed, the Badger Institute is pursuing strategies and platforms that will increase its ability to reach Badger State residents and policy-makers increasingly frustrated by the lack of objective, in-depth information.

"The name WPRI has served us well over the years," said Badger Institute President Mike Nichols. "But the name no longer encompasses all that we do and doesn't fully express our deep attachment to the state."

"Wisconsin is the Badger State because of the early 19th century miners who burrowed into hillsides at night to sleep after a long day of work," Nichols

continued. “That industriousness and the belief that hard work leads to prosperity and a better life have long been Wisconsin hallmarks. So we’re reaffirming our past but also moving ahead in a digital age where it’s important to adapt and innovate.”

In addition to original research, scholarly analysis and public opinion polling, the Badger Institute is recommitting to its role as an independent source of facts and analysis, creating a visiting fellows program and embarking on a statewide speaking tour.

The institute will continue to expand its investigative reporting, commentary, storytelling and analysis on the social and policy issues of the day through video, online reporting and a new print and digital magazine, [Diggings](#), which replaces *Wisconsin Interest*. As fewer media outlets dig into the stories that affect the quality of life of Wisconsin residents, the Badger Institute will fill the gap. In addition, a team of investigative journalists is engaged in a multi-year examination of the onerous impacts of federal grant spending in Wisconsin.

New or expanded policy initiatives will focus on the devolution of federal control to the states, government regulation and corrections reforms, but the institute’s No. 1 priority for the foreseeable future will be tax reform.

“We doubt there is anyone in this state right now who thinks our current tax levels and mix are optimum,” said Tom Howatt, chairman of the Badger Institute Board of Directors and former president and chief executive officer of Wausau Paper. “While progress has been made in recent years, Wisconsin remains a highly taxed state, and we believe a comprehensive, objective assessment of the current tax mix will lead to a solution that better allows communities to grow, businesses to thrive and individuals to prosper.”

“We will work in conjunction with the Tax Foundation, local tax experts, economists with modeling capability and pollsters to examine the current tax structure and suggest policy reforms that will make Wisconsin the most desirable place to live, work and do business in America,” said Nichols.

Starting in November, Nichols and Badger Institute Vice President Michael Jahr will partner with civic and other organizations to host policy meetings throughout the state. Schedules of events and locations will be released intermittently.

“We’re excited about this new chapter,” said Nichols. “Over the last 30 years, our

research and opinion polling have been instrumental in everything from implementation of school choice to passage of right-to-work legislation to the repeal of prevailing wage. We have helped shape pivotal debates on transportation, corrections reform, over-regulation and more. We'll continue to employ reliable research and reporting to advance principles and policies that provide all Wisconsinites the freedom and opportunity they need to flourish — and we'll do it in new ways that help all Badger State residents move forward.”

The Badger Institute's new website can be found at www.badgerinstitute.org. You can follow the institute on Facebook and Twitter at @badgerinstitute.