

UW-Madison: Kohl donates \$10 million to support La Follette School's public outreach, teaching, and research efforts

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CONTACT: Lisa Hildebrand, 608-263-7657, lhildebrand@lafollette.wisc.edu

MADISON – Representing Wisconsin in the U.S. Senate for 24 years, Herb Kohl demonstrated his deep commitment to public service and his ethos of civility in public debate and policymaking. A \$10 million gift announced today from Herb Kohl Philanthropies to the University of Wisconsin-Madison's La Follette School of Public Affairs will extend the reach of that legacy.

Kohl's donation, the Kohl Initiative, focuses on three priorities that will expand the School's public outreach mission, advance the training of future public leaders, and support influential research by faculty and students. It is the largest donation in La Follette School history.

"Today, more than ever, we need strong public and private sector leaders – people like Sen. Kohl, who thoughtfully and respectfully discuss thorny policy issues," said La Follette School Director and Professor Susan Webb Yackee. "UW-Madison has seen tremendous growth in civic engagement among its students, and this gift will allow the La Follette School to educate many more future leaders, who will tackle the world's toughest problems with an evidence-based approach."

Chancellor Rebecca Blank said the university is deeply grateful for Sen. Kohl's generosity to his alma mater, his support of education across the state, and his decades-long service to the state and country in the U.S. Senate.

“Sen. Kohl has shown lifelong dedication to UW-Madison and this gift will provide tremendous opportunities for our students, faculty, staff and community,” said Blank, who holds an appointment as a La Follette School faculty member. “The Kohl Initiative embodies the Wisconsin Idea – especially the initiative’s outreach innovation fund, which will help expand the school’s impact in the state and the nation.”

Sen. Kohl, who was a founding member of the La Follette School’s Board of Visitors, believes the School is critically important for solving many of the country’s most difficult issues.

“Our democracy is being threatened by bitter partisanship, and the La Follette School is poised to lead by example – fostering cooperation, respectful discourse, and service to others,” said Kohl. “The school’s commitment to be a convener of thoughtful debate and evidence-based research provides a critical path for moving our country forward.”

In 2016, Sen. Kohl’s \$1.5 million donation to the La Follette School launched the Herb Kohl Public Service Research Competition, which has provided financial support for collaborative faculty-student research that informs critical public policy and governance debates. Community outreach is a key component of the research competition.

Sen. Kohl’s most recent gift will extend the research competition and will support several new efforts. The Kohl Initiative will allow the school to educate more students, support undergraduate public policy internship opportunities, increase partnerships with nonpartisan organizations, host conferences on critical policy topics, and teach more high-demand classes in areas such as public and nonprofit leadership, economic development and social entrepreneurship.

About U.S. Senator Herb Kohl

Herbert “Herb” Kohl, a Milwaukee businessman and philanthropist, represented Wisconsin in the U.S. Senate from 1989 to 2013. Kohl received his bachelor’s degree in American institutions from UW-Madison in 1956 and his master’s degree in business administration from Harvard University. In 1970, he was named president of Kohl’s – his family-owned chain of grocery and department stores. After selling the business in 1978, he owned the Milwaukee Bucks professional basketball team from 1985 to 2014.

A lifelong Milwaukee resident, Kohl provided the lead donation for the university's Division I basketball and hockey facility, the Kohl Center. In 2016, he gave \$1.5 million to the La Follette School to create the Herb Kohl Public Service Research Competition. He also created the Herb Kohl Education Foundation, which provides scholarships to students and fellowships to educators throughout Wisconsin.

About the Robert M. La Follette School of Public Affairs

Founded in 1967 as the Center for the Study of Public Policy and Administration, the La Follette School of Public Affairs is a highly ranked program that offers domestic and international master's degrees in public management and policy analysis. Students are admitted in comparatively small numbers that encourage collaboration with faculty, staff and peers. The school's faculty have international reputations in their academic disciplines, and they have spent the greater part of their careers working on problems of public policy and governance.

With more than 2,400 alumni, the La Follette School also offers dual- and double-degree programs in urban planning, law, neuroscience, and public health; as well as a certificate program in energy analysis and policy. La Follette School alumni work in the public, private and nonprofit sectors and serve their communities in various capacities.