

# **We Are Many-United Against Hate: McCabe chosen as group director**

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Longtime government watchdog and democracy reform advocate Mike McCabe has agreed to become We Are Many-United Against Hate's first executive director, the group's founder and president Masood Akhtar announced.

"I am honored and beyond excited to take on this new challenge," McCabe said. "Our country is being torn apart. A house divided cannot stand. Those words remain as true and apt to current circumstances as they were nearly two millennia ago when they appeared in scripture and more than a century and a half ago when Lincoln invoked them in one of his most famous appeals to preserve the union. With the repeated eruptions of hate-fueled violence we are witnessing, we need a moral reckoning and a new social contract describing what we all are called to do for our country and each other. We need to figure out how to have civil conversations and build solid relationships with those we have been conditioned to see as enemies. No nation filled with hate can be great."

Akhtar pointed to McCabe's decades of experience running nonprofit organizations, strong communication skills, and his dedication to We Are Many-United Against Hate's mission as among the chief reasons behind his selection as executive director. McCabe has been serving on the group's advisory board since nearly its inception.

"The public response to our mission and various initiatives has been heartwarming and inspiring, but also overwhelming for an all-volunteer operation," Akhtar said. "It has become increasingly clear that we need to build organizational infrastructure

and capacity if our movement is going to continue to grow and prosper. Mike has both the skills and the passion to help us do that.”

McCabe brings a farming background and a lifetime of experience in politics, journalism, nonprofit leadership and public sector management to his new role. Born and raised in Wisconsin, McCabe got his start in life on the farm milking cows and working the land with his family. He has lived across the rural-urban divide, with a foot in both worlds, having spent nearly half of his life out in the country and the rest in the state’s second-largest city and state capital.

McCabe is founder and president of Blue Jean Nation, a grassroots citizen group started in 2015. For 15 years before that he led the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign, an independent watchdog group that tracks the money in state elections and works for reforms making people matter more than money in politics. In that role, McCabe blew the whistle on wrongdoing by elected officials and earned a reputation as one of the nation’s best political money trackers. He was recognized by the Society of Professional Journalists and Wisconsin Freedom of Information Council as the “Citizen Openness Advocate of the Year” for 2012, and the University of Wisconsin’s School of Journalism honored him with its Distinguished Service Award in 2015.

While leading Blue Jean Nation, McCabe did an award-winning radio commentary series called “Democracy Checkup” that aired on several community radio stations including Madison’s WORT-FM and was among the winners in the Wisconsin Broadcasters Association’s 2016 Awards for Excellence for best editorial commentary in large market radio programming. McCabe appeared in the documentary films *Citizen Koch* (2013) and *Pay 2 Play: Democracy’s High Stakes* (2014). He authored *Blue Jeans in High Places: The Coming Makeover of American Politics*, which is in its fourth printing. *The Progressive* magazine named it one of the best books of 2014. A dynamic and much sought-after public speaker, McCabe has made more than 2,000 presentations to a wide range of audiences over the course of his career.

Years of environmental activism and advocacy for sustainable agriculture practices earned McCabe recognition as Environmental Advocate of the Year by the Clean Water Action Council in 2004 and Friend of the Family Farmer by the Wisconsin Farmers Union in 2015. He served in the Peace Corps from 1989 to 1991 in the West African country of Mali, where he trained teachers from 68 rural primary schools in agricultural and vocational skills and in teaching methods aimed at

making instruction more applied and practical for Malian students. He planned and facilitated 16 districtwide teacher training workshops and authored a technical guide for teachers in French.

Before his stint in the Peace Corps, McCabe ran a statewide civic education program for the nonprofit Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance for four years. In addition to making hundreds of classroom presentations, McCabe produced videotapes on government and tax policy for classroom use and did teacher training. He co-authored a textbook on Wisconsin government and co-authored a curriculum guide on state and local government for the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction while serving on a state social studies curriculum committee. McCabe later worked for six years as the Madison Metropolitan School District's public communications coordinator and legislative liaison.

Though only in its infancy, We Are Many-United Against Hate already is gaining national recognition, as Akhtar received the FBI's National Director's Community Leadership Award in May 2019. In 2017 Akhtar's efforts were saluted by the Southern Poverty Law Center with a Certificate of Appreciation for his contributions to the ongoing fight against hatred and intolerance in America. Akhtar's name was added to the Wall of Tolerance in Montgomery, Alabama to provide inspiration to all those who choose to take a stand against hatred.