

# Badger Institute: McIlheran joins Badger Institute to lead Mandate for Madison project

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*New staff and board members will increase institute's reach and impact*

Oct. 20, 2021 - The Badger Institute today announced the hiring of longtime policy and communications professional Patrick McIlheran as its director of policy. McIlheran, who has served U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson for more than 10 years in different roles, will oversee the institute's policy blueprint - a forward-looking "Mandate for Madison" - expected to be published in 2022.

The hire reflects continuing growth taking place at the Badger Institute, a policy research and journalism organization working to help Wisconsin prosper through free markets, individual aspiration and limited government.

Longtime school choice advocate Jim Bender is now advancing the Institute's policy reforms in the Capitol. Two new members have joined the institute's Board of Directors: Ellen Nowak, a member of the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin and former secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Administration, and Nick Bauer, founder and managing partner at Operose Advisors. Experienced administrator Katee Holcomb also joined the Badger Institute this week as executive assistant.

"It's clear that we are at an inflection point in Wisconsin," said Badger Institute President Mike Nichols. "Either we embrace policies and practices that allow Wisconsinites to prosper, or we continue down the path of bigger government, more dependency and fewer opportunities. At the Badger Institute, we're assembling a team that will allow us to redouble our efforts to preserve free enterprise, individual initiative and civil society. Patrick, Ellen, Nick, Katee and Jim bring a wealth of

knowledge and experience that will quickly move us – and this state – forward.” McIlheran has decades of top-level policy, communications and political experience. He served Sen. Johnson in a number of roles, including deputy chief of staff, policy advisor and communications director. Prior to that, he had a long career with the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, including seven years as a columnist, where one of his primary areas of focus was Milwaukee’s complex environment of school choice. McIlheran will manage the development of a comprehensive policy agenda – titled A Mandate for Madison – based on objective, data-driven fundamentals. He will help identify, coordinate and research issue areas including education reform, tax restructuring, workforce policy, government transparency, infrastructure policy and economic policy.

“I’m excited and honored to join the team at the Badger Institute, Wisconsin’s leading forum for researching policy centered on the principles that undergird our American liberty,” said McIlheran.

Bender was president of School Choice Wisconsin for nearly 10 years and before that served as chief of staff and communications director for Assembly Leader Jeff Fitzgerald.

Nowak serves on the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin. She previously served in Gov. Scott Walker’s administration as the Secretary of the Department of Administration, chief of staff to Waukesha County Executive Dan Vrakas, legal counsel and chief of staff to the Speaker of the Wisconsin Assembly and deputy director of School Choice Wisconsin. She also served in private practice at Mallery & Zimmerman SC. She has a law degree from Marquette University and a Bachelor of Science from the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee.

Bauer, a chartered financial analyst, is managing partner at Operose Advisors, a firm he founded. Prior to that, he was principal and director of Geneva Capital Management in Milwaukee, where he oversaw the growth of the firm’s institutional business from \$1 billion of assets under management to \$6.8 billion. He played a key role in the sale of Geneva’s business to Henderson Global Investors based in London and subsequently managed Henderson’s North American institutional business development efforts. He holds a B.B.A. from the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee.

Holcomb spent more than a decade at Elmbrook Church in Brookfield serving in increasingly complex roles in process management, operations and administration. “We will continue to expand our policy work, our reporting and our presence in Madison in the months ahead,” said Nichols. “Wisconsinites who aspire to better lives, who believe in work and capitalism and civil society, in free enterprise, will find at the Badger Institute the solutions and facts needed to help this state

prosper.”