

Tom Loftus: LFB'S Lang has been the calm in the biennial budget storm

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Bob Lang has graced the Wisconsin Legislature with his calm competence for 50 years. And that is just one reason the longtime director of the nonpartisan Legislative Fiscal Bureau is the right person to receive the Thompson Center's inaugural Tommy G. Thompson Distinguished Public Leadership Award.

Calmness is the rarest quality in the Legislature. Do nothing is the hardest of all things to tell a legislator to do.

When the captain had a shaky grip on the rudder, and the crew near mutiny, Bob was the faint breeze that still moved the ship.

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Good for us to remember today that a public servant serves the people. Bob did this by giving life to budget numbers and presenting options for policy.

Usually there were three options. Bob could read the room and the mood. Somehow option number two was always the Goldilocks of the choices.

There was a legendary state senator named Walter Hollander. He was the co-chair of the Legislature's Joint Finance Committee. We called him "half a loaf" Hollander. Whatever the budget request, he found a way to go just far enough to make people happy.

Bob was the one that sliced the bread.

The hiring and mentoring of staff for the fiscal bureau by Bob was a learn-by-example, learn-by-questioning method that Socrates would recognize.

Meet someone who once worked for Bob and your day will go better.

The center is honoring the right person.

It was my pleasure to nominate Bob. But I was just acting as an agent for legislators past and present. On their behalf thank you, Bob.

See the announcement from the Thompson Center [here](#).

-Loftus, D-Sun Prairie, was a longtime state representative and Assembly speaker.