

# Tommy G. Thompson Center on Public Leadership: Distinguished Public Leadership Award to be given to Dr. Howard Fuller

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MADISON—The Tommy G. Thompson Center on Public Leadership is delighted to announce that Dr. Howard Fuller will be honored as the 2026 Tommy G. Thompson Distinguished Public Leadership Award recipient. The ceremony will take place at 1 p.m. on Thursday, May 7, at the Dr. Howard Fuller Collegiate Academy in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Consistent with the legacy of Governor Thompson, the Tommy G. Thompson Distinguished Public Leadership Award seeks to recognize Wisconsinites who have committed themselves to public service, worked tirelessly to advance sound public policy, and exhibited virtuous leadership. The award honors leaders who have exercised sound judgment, displayed an entrepreneurial spirit, and served as exceptional role models for others in public service.

Dr. Howard Fuller's career includes many years of leadership in public service and education. He founded the Institute for the Transformation of Learning at Marquette University in 1995 and served as Superintendent of Milwaukee Public Schools from 1991 to 1995. Dr. Fuller became nationally known for his steadfast support for fundamental educational reform with a focus on parent choice. He retired from Marquette University in June 2020, where he holds the title of Distinguished Professor Emeritus.

Dr. Fuller earned his B.S. in Sociology from Carroll College (now Carroll University) in Waukesha, Wisconsin, in 1962; his M.S.A. in Social Administration from Western

Reserve University (now Case Western Reserve University) in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1964; and his Ph.D. in Sociological Foundations of Education from Marquette University in 1986. His positions prior to serving as Superintendent of Milwaukee Public Schools included: Director of the Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services (1988–1991); Dean of General Education at the Milwaukee Area Technical College (1986–1988); Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Employment Relations (1983–1986); and Associate Director of the Educational Opportunity Program at Marquette University (1979–1983). Dr. Fuller was also a Senior Fellow with the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University (1995–1997).

The Thompson Center is a nonpartisan institute within the University of Wisconsin System, established by the Wisconsin Legislature in 2017 to advance research, teaching, and policy reform regarding effective public leadership. Previous recipients of the Distinguished Public Leadership Award include Paul Farrow and Tia Nelson (2025), U.S. Representatives David Obey and Thomas Petri (2024), Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice David Prosser (2023), and longtime Legislative Fiscal Bureau Director Bob Lang (2022).