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Thursday, June 26, 2025

## WHA Board Convenes for June Meeting Amid Fast-Moving State and Federal Policy Activity

The Wisconsin Hospital Association (WHA) Board of Directors met in Madison on June 19 for a full agenda, including strategic updates, key advocacy discussions and special recognitions for outgoing board members.

### State and Federal Advocacy: High Stakes, Intersecting Timelines

WHA's Government Relations team provided an in-depth update on concurrent and complex deliberations occurring at both the state and federal levels. For the first time in recent memory, both the state and federal budgets are advancing on nearly parallel tracks, with significant implications for Wisconsin hospitals.

Key among the challenges are critical discussions around provider assessments. Board members engaged in robust discussion about how outcomes at one level could significantly affect the other.

### WHA Quality Department Celebrates Major Grant Awards

WHA Clinical Quality Improvement Manager Jenny Pritchett shared important updates on new grant-supported quality initiatives. WHA was recognized through Superior Health Quality Alliance's 13th Scope of Work award from Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Landmark Initiative by the Advancing a Healthier Wisconsin (AHW) Endowment.

These recognitions affirm WHA's foundational role in shaping health care quality efforts across Wisconsin and beyond. Through the new CMS contract, WHA and its partners will support Medicare quality improvement across 14 states. The AHW award will allow WHA to work with the Dr. Lorna Breen Heroes Foundation to implement workforce well-being strategies in health care organizations throughout Wisconsin.

### Special Recognitions

The meeting concluded with special recognitions for outgoing board members – Chris Woleske, Scott Turner and Gordy Lewis.

Woleske, President of Bellin Health and Executive Vice President of Bellin and Gundersen Health System at Emplify Health, will retire on June 30, 2025. Woleske has been a long-standing and deeply engaged WHA leader since 2016. Over the years, she has contributed meaningfully to WHA's mission through active service, advocacy and thought leadership. Woleske was consistently a top supporter of the Wisconsin Hospitals PAC & Conduit. In 2023, Woleske received the WHA Distinguished Service Award, recognizing her exceptional service and leadership with the organization and Wisconsin's health care community.

"Chris has been the exemplar WHA member and board member in so many ways it's hard to recount them all. She has served on the WHA board since 2016, and among other things, participated in some critical board work groups during that time, including helping lead our strategic plan development in 2019 and 2022. The list of her contributions to WHA and our work is so impressive, but I will forever be grateful to Chris for her engagement and counsel during the COVID pandemic. She helped us, and her state and local colleagues, including from different health systems, and the WI Department of Health Services navigate some unprecedented challenges," said Borgerding.

"I was very proud and truly honored to present my friend Chris with the well-deserved WHA Distinguished Service Award in 2023, and again recognize her at our June board gathering, her final meeting. Chris leaves a true and admirable imprint on Wisconsin health care. We wish Chris, who is also a proud new Grandma, a wonderful retirement," Borgerding continued.



Chris Woleske and Eric Borgerding



of the Wisconsin Hospital Association's leadership since joining the WHA Board of Directors in 2022. During his tenure, Turner was a regular participant in WHA's flagship advocacy and educational events, including his personal commitment to political advocacy through the Wisconsin Hospitals PAC & Conduit.

"Scott Turner has been a valued member of the WHA Board, bringing thoughtful insight to our work. While we're sad to see him leave Wisconsin, we're grateful for his service and leadership during a critical time for our state's health care system. We wish Scott all the best in his new role and know he will continue to make a positive impact wherever he serves," said Borgerding.

Lewis, CEO of Burnett Medical Center, is retiring on June 30, 2025 after a distinguished career of leadership in rural health care and deep, sustained engagement with the Wisconsin Hospital Association. Lewis

has served on the WHA Board since 2010 participating in many policy committees, including Public Policy Council, Advocacy Committee, Telemedicine Taskforce, Council on Rural Health and Council on Finance and Payment. He has been a strong grassroots advocate and consistent supporter of the Wisconsin Hospitals PAC & Conduit.

Borgerding said, "Gordy Lewis has been a rock-solid leader for rural health care in Wisconsin and a committed, trusted voice within WHA since 2010. His insight, candor and deep concern for patients and communities have made him an indispensable part of our advocacy and policy work. As Gordy enters retirement, we thank him for his exceptional service and wish him the very best in this well-earned next chapter."



Gordy Lewis

### Borgerding's Final Board Meeting



Dr. Jeff Bahr recognized Eric Borgerding for his 27 years at WHA.

Finally, the WHA Board took the final minutes of the meeting to recognize and celebrate the leadership of WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding, who will retire on June 30, 2025, after 27 years with the organization—including the past 10 as CEO. In a heartfelt tribute, WHA Board Chair Dr. Jeff Bahr delivered remarks that cleverly wove in song titles and lyrics from Rush, Eric's favorite band, offering both humor and sincere appreciation for Borgerding's legacy.

Borgerding, who will continue in an advisory capacity through the end of 2025, thanked the Board, saying: "Representing Wisconsin's hospitals and health systems has been the honor of a lifetime. I've had the privilege to work with some of the most talented, mission-driven people in health care and public policy—inside and outside WHA. I'm grateful for every moment, and I know WHA's best days are still ahead with Kyle and this incredible team at the helm."

Incoming President and CEO, WHA's Senior Vice President of Government Relations Kyle O'Brien, will assume leadership on July 1, 2025, becoming only the seventh chief executive

officer in WHA's 105-year history.

## IN THIS ISSUE

- Parliamentary Rules out Key Medicaid Provisions in One Big Beautiful Bill
- Trump Administration Announces Agreement by Health Insurers to Improve Prior Authorization Processes
- WHA Board Convenes for June Meeting Amid Fast-Moving State and Federal Policy Activity
- Help Us Cross the Halfway Mark – Support the Wisconsin Hospitals PAC & Conduit Today
- Dr. Mark Thompson Returns to Wisconsin to Lead Upland Hills Health
- Register for Aug. 8 WHA Financial Workshop
- Gundersen Partners of WHA Celebrates 75 Years

## EDUCATION EVENTS

Jul. 16, 2025

EMTALA Update 2025

**Jul. 23, 2025**

EMTALA Update 2025

**Aug. 8, 2025**

WHA Financial Workshop