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Cathy Jacobson Returns to Honor Eric Borgerding at WHA's Advocacy Day

During WHA's 2025 Advocacy Day, Cathy Jacobson, former CEO of Froedtert Health and longtime WHA Board leader, offered a heartfelt tribute to WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding, recognizing his nearly 30 years of dedicated service to Wisconsin's hospitals and health systems. Borgerding will retire on June 30, 2025.

Jacobson began by reflecting on Borgerding's remarkable career, highlighting his transition from WHA's chief lobbyist to President and CEO in 2015. She praised Borgerding's unwavering commitment to advocacy, stating, "Eric is and always will be at his core, a lobbyist. That is why there is no better time to recognize his role as the state's leading hospital advocate." Jacobson, who flew in from Arizona for the event, added, "It would take a lot to lure me away from my desert Scottsdale home, but I am truly honored to be here today."

Under Borgerding's leadership, WHA's Advocacy Day has grown into the largest lobbying event of its kind, with over 1,200 attendees this year. "Eric wanted to turn WHA into the most effective lobbying organization in the state," Jacobson said. "Look around you—I think he accomplished that."



Eric Borgerding and Cathy Jacobson

Jacobson noted several of Borgerding's most impactful achievements, including restoring Wisconsin's medical malpractice caps, increasing Medicaid assessments, securing millions in workforce training grants and guiding WHA and its members through the COVID-19 pandemic. "Eric's list of lobbying and advocacy accomplishments at WHA runs long, so I'm only going to be able to mention the most notable."

She also shared personal reflections, expressing gratitude for his support and mentorship. She said, "Eric taught all of us to play the long game, working on bipartisan relationships and to always remember why we were there and why it's important to engage."

In response, Borgerding expressed gratitude for the recognition and the opportunity to serve WHA's mission. "WHA has been a part of my family for 23 years, and I am a very, very lucky man that I had the chance to not only do what I love, but to do it for the people I've had the privilege to work with."

Borgerding expressed his excitement for the future, mentioning his plans to spend more time with his family while continuing to support WHA's mission. He also acknowledged the leadership succession plan announced in November 2024, stating that he would be handing over the reins to WHA Senior Vice President of Government Relations Kyle O'Brien, whom he described as "the best decision I ever made in my professional life." Eric stated, "I am very proud of WHA. Perhaps one of the proudest things is that I'm going to be handing the reins on July 1 to one of those team members that I consider my brother."

The tribute to Eric Borgerding was a moving moment at WHA's 2025 Advocacy Day, honoring a leader whose vision, commitment and results have shaped Wisconsin's health care landscape.