

Vol. 70, Issue 10

Thursday, March 12, 2026

## President's Column: "Wisconsin Blew Them Away"

By Kyle O'Brien, WHA President and CEO

Knowing how hard our team works to put on the state's largest industry advocacy day, I love receiving and sharing post-event emails – especially from first-time attendees.

Admittedly, my favorite messages come from those who have experience in advocacy but recently relocated to Wisconsin from another state. The first time they walk into the Monona Terrace and see over a thousand chairs in a room, they know that something is different here in Wisconsin. The energy is contagious, the content is relevant and attendees get to be a first-hand witness and "citizen lobbyist" in our advocacy work under the dome in Madison.



“ I felt that [the WHA] team went out of their way to get it right for all of us, and they did.

### WHA member leader about 2026 Advocacy Day

In an email I received from a new Wisconsin hospital leader, she said that she had attended hospital association advocacy day events in several other states, but "Wisconsin blew them away."

A veteran hospital CEO and former WHA board member sent me a text and said "I had several team members in attendance and they have been literally raving about the experience since." His team traveled over six hours, roundtrip, to attend.

During his acceptance speech for the 2026 Advocacy All Star Award on behalf of Children's Wisconsin, Gil Peri, Children's Wisconsin CEO, talked about the effectiveness of the Wisconsin Hospital Association, saying, "I've been in different associations and this is the best one in the country from my perspective."

This year the WHA team made several changes to our Advocacy Day program, large and small, to improve attendee experience.

We added a member and lawmaker networking reception Tuesday night before Advocacy Day, for those who could come into Madison early. This new part of our Advocacy Day program attracted over 200 of our state's leading hospital and health system leaders, board members and volunteers - surpassing even the WHA team's expectations. This additional event gave hospital and health system leaders, staff, trustees and volunteers more time to be with each other and network with their peers across the state.

Other requests included in the 2025 post-event survey were thoughtfully accommodated by our team, including water bottles for those trekking up to the Capitol for legislative visits and audio/visual enhancements throughout the day to improve the production value of our program.

But Advocacy Day would not be successful if it were not for the commitment hospital and system leaders have made to this program.

**Our member leaders make Advocacy Day a priority because they know the impact of advocacy on patient care in Wisconsin.**

This year, over 600 people hospital advocates went up to the Capitol, in the final days of our legislative floor period, to help move critical legislation forward to reduce discharge delays in hospitals. As the WHA lobbying team has been meeting with legislators in the last two weeks, we have heard directly from lawmakers about their visits with hospital advocates during Advocacy Day.

This is the power of a unified (and large) grassroots voice combined with credible lobbying. While the keynotes are great and panels are informative, this – meeting with your elected officials – is what Advocacy Day is all about.

Our post-event survey showed that over 90% of this year's attendees said that they are likely to attend again in 2027. Help us make next year's Advocacy Day even better by holding **April 21, 2027** on your calendar and encouraging those around you to attend.

Next year will be critical for hospitals, as we lobby on a state budget with a new Governor and new lawmakers. As Jonathan Martin said during his keynote remarks, politics is not a "spectator sport" – we all need to be engaged.

Advocacy Day is our team's best opportunity to showcase WHA to our members. The day reflects the strength of our organization, highlighted by a dedicated staff committed to excellence, bipartisan relationships with lawmakers, and effective advocacy that produces meaningful results for our members and the patients they serve.

We never settle for anything less.

## IN THIS ISSUE

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- WHA Continues Push on Next-of-Kin Legislation
- President's Column: "Wisconsin Blew Them Away"
- Hospital Expenses, Including Costs for Labor, Drugs and Supplies, Grew Twice as Fast as Hospital Prices in 2025
- Have You Read WHA's Annual Workforce Report Yet? – Register Today for the 2026 Wisconsin Health Care Workforce Webinar Series – Part 1
- Executive Project Sponsorship - WHA Health Care Leadership Academy Cohort Participates in Session

## EDUCATION EVENTS

**Mar. 13, 2026**

2026 Physician Leadership Development Conference

**Mar. 16, 2026**

Wisconsin Rural Health and Substance Use Clinical Support (RHeSUS) Program Offerings

**Mar. 17, 2026**

When Ultrasound Becomes Predictive: Predicting Preterm Birth with AI: Turning Routine Ultrasound into Actionable Insight