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## Gordy Lewis Receives WHA 2025 Distinguished Service Award

On Dec. 23, WHA President/CEO Kyle O'Brien and Spooner Health Chief Executive Officer Mike Schafer presented Gordy Lewis, retired CEO of Burnett Medical Center, with WHA's Distinguished Service Award for 2025. WHA's annual Distinguished Service Award honors senior health care executives who have demonstrated a long-standing and impactful commitment to advancing health care statewide and in their community.



*L to R: Mike Schafer, Gordy Lewis, Kyle O'Brien*

"For nearly two decades, Gordy Lewis was an actively engaged member of the Wisconsin Hospital Association. His years of service, including eleven years on the WHA Board and 16 years on the WHA Public Policy Council, was only matched by the impact he had on public policy in support of hospitals and their care teams," said Schafer, who joined Tamarack Health President and CEO Luke Beirl and Essentia Health Northwest Wisconsin Administrator Kim Pearson in nominating Lewis for the Award.

"Gordy embodied the phrase "citizen lobbyist" on behalf of hospitals, as he worked hand-in-hand with the WHA lobbying team to impact legislation including the Critical Access Hospital Assessment, the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact, multiple state budgets and defending hospitals on issues like price transparency," they continued.



*Gordy Lewis with WHA and other hospital leaders in Washington, DC in April 2023.*

Among countless advocacy interactions, Gordy's "shining moment" was hosting Gov. Scott Walker at Burnett Medical Center in Grantsburg to sign into law Wisconsin's adoption of the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact in 2014. This Compact would streamline licensure burden for physicians from other states to practice in Wisconsin and pave the way for other licensure reforms, including those WHA successfully advocated for during the COVID-19 pandemic, often referred to as Act 10 licenses. Gordy worked closely with his local legislator, State Senator Sheila Harsdorf, to move this legislation forward.



*Gordy Lewis (left) looks on as then-Gov. Scott Walker signs the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact into law at Burnett Medical Center in Grantsburg on Dec. 14, 2014.*

As is the case with many things in politics, what seemed like an easy legislative change resulted in a significant and challenging advocacy lift as some out-of-state groups objected to Wisconsin joining the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact. Gordy's tenacity and coordinated support of WHA's advocacy work provided the necessary pressure to pass this legislation and have it signed into law by the Governor. Today, thousands of physicians are practicing in Wisconsin because of expedited licensure processes that began with the Medical Licensure Compact.



*Gordy Lewis with WHA General Counsel Matthew Stanford testifying in support of the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact*

"Gordy was not only a staunch advocate for health care in Wisconsin, but he was also a personal friend to many of his peers on the WHA Board of Directors and the WHA staff," said O'Brien. "The entire team at WHA congratulates Gordy on this honor and extends our heartfelt gratitude for his advocacy partnership 'in the trenches' and strong support of our work."

In recognition of Gordy, WHA will make a \$500 donation to the charity of his choice.

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## EDUCATION EVENTS

### **Jan. 6, 2026**

Age-Friendly Webinar Series Featuring Advocate Health

### **Jan. 14, 2026**

Caring for Wisconsin's Caregivers Well-Being First Champion Challenge for Credentialing Kickoff

### **Jan. 28, 2026**

2026 WHA Health Care Leadership Academy