

# PREFACE

*Since the foundation of the Republic Americans have understood that a representative democracy is dependent upon responsible citizenship; citizens that understand and practice shared core values – values that help us build a common framework for justice, fairness, and mutual respect. Americans are overwhelmingly decent, hardworking, honest people but even the most cursory glance at the key indicators of civic responsibility in contemporary society reveals that something is going terribly wrong. Our moral compass no longer seems to point unerringly toward a “true north” of civic virtue. Historically, this diagnosis is very grim. Moral degradation inevitably leads to civic decay. People without common core values cannot construct an economically viable or socially secure society because fundamentally both the individual and collective motivation to build or invest – to extend oneself into permanence – rests in valuing something beyond oneself.*

*With a courageous yet realistic belief that Wisconsin could be an exemplary leader among the states, in 1851 Wisconsin’s elected representatives adopted the challenge “Forward” as the official motto of our growing state. History has proven the optimistic call to be prophetic rather than rhetorical as Wisconsin became a national leader in education, agriculture, industry and commerce while maintaining and advancing the highest standards of justice, equality, public integrity and social responsibility. People from dozens of nations speaking a myriad of languages and following innumerable distinctive customs were melded into an extraordinary, cooperative venture that became our state. Their success – and ours – is grounded in an unwavering commitment to core universal, ethical values such as integrity, honesty, fairness, responsibility, and respect for ourselves and for others. Virtue, the individual and corporate embodiment of these core ethical values, is the bedrock upon which our extraordinary success as a state rests.*

*In this second half of our second century the citizens of Wisconsin continue to affirm and advance the vision and confidence of our founders by our unwavering commitment to moving “Forward.” Therefore,*

# A Wisconsin Call to Character

**W**e call upon all citizens of the great state of Wisconsin to affirm the necessity of honorable character in the foundation and advancement of an economically viable and socially secure society *and* to embody this affirmation through...

Committing ourselves to making virtue – the embodiment of core ethical values in every avenue of our lives – the foundational principle and standard of measurement in all of our actions and endeavors;

Endorsing and supporting the efforts of our fellow citizens from business, government, education, industry, the trades and the community working to ensure a greater future for our state by exemplifying, teaching and upholding core universal values such as integrity, honesty, fairness, responsibility, and respect for ourselves and for others – values that are shared by all Americans regardless of race, ethnic background, religion, or status;

Recognizing that as elementary and secondary education is the one convention that reaches almost every citizen of our state, we must encourage and support the intentional, proactive effort by parents, teachers, administrators, schools, school districts, communities and the state to instill in Wisconsin’s students core universal, ethical values;

Affirming and supporting individuals, communities, schools and school districts that exemplify specific, targeted efforts to communicate and integrate into the lives of children and youth the aforementioned core character values; and by encouraging and rewarding such efforts.

We believe that Wisconsin’s future will be even brighter than our luminous past as long as virtue is upheld as the standard by which our endeavors, goals, actions, and activities are measured and governed. The promise of “Forward” is also a summons – a call to character for all people of all backgrounds and walks of life who share the great privilege of calling Wisconsin home.

Month: \_\_\_\_\_ 2011

Please print and sign name, organization, previous or present responsibilities and/or community you are associated with. WE THANK YOU ON BEHALF OF OUR CHILDREN WHO ARE LIKELY TO FOLLOW OUR EXAMPLE.

\_\_\_\_\_ Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_ Signature

\_\_\_\_\_ Organization/Responsibility/Community