

Blue Jean Nation "No time for pint-sized thinking"

Written by Mike McCabe, Blue Jean Nation

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<http://newiprosessive.com/images/stories/S5/wisconsin-koch-industries-s5.jpg>



America has some king-sized challenges, and Wisconsin is showing more severe symptoms than most states. Here are seven ways to shake things up, starting close to home.

ALTOONA, WI - America has some king-sized challenges. Economic insecurity born of simultaneous deindustrialization and globalization. Stagnant wages. Grotesque and growing [in equality](#)

. Nagging fear that the nation's children will end up [worse off](#)

than their parents. Strained social relations. Political parties that offer empty promises and false choices when they are not pointing fingers of blame at the other side. Collapsing public confidence in those parties and the democratic process.

No part of the country is immune to these conditions, but Wisconsin is showing more severe symptoms than most states. Wage and job growth in Wisconsin is [lagging behind](#) the U.S. average. The state's poverty rate has reached its [highest level in 30 years](#)

. Wisconsin leads the nation in [shrinkage of the middle class](#)

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When major change came to America in the past, it's fascinating how often Wisconsin led the way. There's no time like the present for Wisconsin to get back out there in the lead. With the enormity of today's challenges, this is no time for pussyfooting.

Because most people have [lost faith](#) in the political system and are [thoroughly disgusted](#) with the politicians who continue to happily operate within that system, and because most of the general public sees big political donations as nothing more than legal bribes, the law should be brought in line with the broad public consensus that has formed

. **Any political donation over \$200**
[should be legally defined as a bribe](#)

and therefore treated as a felony

Any spending by interest groups benefiting a candidate for office should be legally considered a donation

Because wages are stagnant and economic inequality has reached alarming levels, **the minimum wage should be turned into a living wage**

. The

[Fight for \\$15](#)

is gaining traction in hundreds of cities across the country, the more the better, but it is far less likely to catch on in small towns and rural areas where the cost of living and average worker earnings are considerably lower than in big cities. So how about a

Drive for 55, setting the wage floor at 55% of the average wage workers earn in a community or region

? This would produce minimum wages at or near \$15 an hour in large metropolitan areas and would substantially boost the minimum wage everywhere while flexibly accounting for differences in local economies.

Because the balance of power has been tilted against workers, **rewrite the law to make [forming a union a civil right](#) for all employees in every sector of our economy**

Because the poorest of all Americans [pay double](#) the tax rate paid by the country's richest few when all state and local taxes are factored in,

taxes on the rich should be raised and taxes on the poor and middle class should be lowered until the rich pay taxes at a rate that's at least on a par with the rate paid by everyone else if not higher

Because feed-the-rich policies inspired by the "trickle-down" economic theory have been a miserable failure, never producing more than a trickle for the masses and causing grotesque economic inequality and the slow but steady extermination of the middle class, **Wisconsin should lead the way in ending crony capitalism and put the state's corporate welfare office — the [failed](#)**

Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation — out of business

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. Use the tens of millions of dollars saved each year by abolishing the WEDC to far better use, like paying to bring high-speed Internet and mobile phone service to areas of the state without access to these 21st Century necessities.

Because education is our best hope for building a better and more prosperous future, and our best weapon against economic and social decline, **Wisconsin should blaze a trail for the nation in making education as accessible and affordable for future generations as past generations made it for us.**

Such a lofty goal won't be reached overnight, but the state could fast-track the pursuit by ending the [failed 25-year experiment](#)

with taxpayer-subsidized private schooling and using the savings to [restore funding stolen from public schools](#)

and buy down college tuition in pursuit of the goal of debt-free higher education.

And because having government as close to the people as possible and having decentralized decision making at the community level is preferable to top-down rule with authority in just a few hands, **Wisconsin should restore local control by repealing all [128 laws enacted since 2011 giving state officials more say and local communities less](#)**

There you have it . . . seven ways to shake things up, starting close to home. And here's hoping they inspire 70 more and create a ripple effect across the country.

— *Mike McCabe*

Find out more about Mike and Blue Jean Nation at <http://www.bluejeannation.com/>