

Blue Jean Nation "A canary in the castle"

Posted on Jan 11, Posted by [Mike McCabe, Blue Jean Nation](#) Category [Wisconsin](#)



We have a new president who modeled his gold-plated New York City penthouse after Versailles. Wisconsin is a shadow of its former self. We've got so much more in us than we are showing today.

ALTOONA, WI - Heard it [said](#) the other day that America is about to have its 45th president and first king. What's undeniable is a new Gilded Age has dawned. Literally. We have a new president who [modeled](#) his [gold-plated](#) New York City penthouse after the Palace of Versailles in France, making a mansion as grand as the White House a big step down in terms of luxury.



Meanwhile, large segments of the nation's population are feeling left behind, struggling to make ends meet and watching their standard of living erode. Places like Wisconsin have more than their share of people in this predicament. Wisconsin is to the nation what canaries are to coal miners. What's been happening to Wisconsin is a signal that there's something toxic about current conditions in our country.

Wisconsin is a shadow of its former self. Once known as a beacon of clean and open government, that reputation is no longer deserved. Once an industrial powerhouse, the state now [leads the nation in shrinkage of the middle class](#) and is [dead last in new business start-ups](#) . Long known as

"America's Dairyland," the state continues to [lose farms](#) at an alarming rate. Wisconsin ranks

[49th in the nation in Internet speed](#)

and has crumbling roads, yet foolishly

[turned away well over a billion dollars in federal money](#)

that could have been used to modernize transportation in the state and expand access to everything from health care to 21st Century information and communications technologies.

Wisconsin proved crucial to Trump's election, providing him with a narrow victory in a state that hasn't gone for a Republican for president since 1984. Wisconsin voters didn't choose Trump because they liked him. He is [deeply unpopular](#) in the state. People in these parts have a reputation for "Wisconsin nice." Nobody is too big for their britches. Nobody acts the way Trump acts and nobody treats people the way Trump treats them.

People here know there is something the matter with the man, something seriously wrong with him. They voted for him anyway because they are desperate. They chose him because they intensely disliked their choices in the election and voted for the candidate they believed was most likely to violently shake up a system they feel is rigged against them. They are hoping against hope for change.

Wisconsin has lost a lot, and its people are starving for a vision of what it can become. The kind of vision that invokes rural traditions like barn raisings to make the point that we are all [in this together](#)

and need to be there for each other. A vision that speaks to the need to create an economy that is of the people, by the people and for the people . . . an economy where if you work you won't be poor. A vision that rejects failed feed-the-rich policies that make up what has been described as "trickle-down economics" but should rightly be called "golden shower economics."

The times cry out for an unwavering commitment to creating living wages, making education as affordable and accessible for our kids and grandkids as past generations made it for us, and bringing high-speed Internet and mobile phone service to every doorstep in Wisconsin. A bright future for Wisconsin is one where no community should have to close a local school, where no small town should have to consider turning paved roads back into gravel because it can't afford to maintain the pavement, where no one anywhere should turn on a water faucet and be afraid to drink what comes out.

Wisconsin needs to dream. Dream about how to become America's renewable energy capital. Dream about being a laboratory of democracy again. Dream about how to be first in the nation,

like we've been [so many times before](#) .

Wisconsin is a shadow of its former self. Becoming great again will require the pioneering spirit we used to be known for. That spirit has been missing for some time now. We've got so much more in us than we are showing today.

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