

Blue Jean Nation 'Wisconsin's biggest problem'

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In recent years, Wisconsin appears to have lost its ambition to be first or best. Roads are going to hell, we rank 49th in Internet speed. We're lagging badly in renewable energy development and jobs. Recovery starts with wanting to be a state of firsts again.

ALTOONA, WI - Wisconsin has more than its share of problems. Our state [leads the nation in shrinkage of the middle class](#)

and is

[dead last in new business start-ups](#)

. The

[roads are going to hell](#)

. We rank

[49th in Internet speed](#)

. We're

[lagging badly](#)

in renewable energy development. We used to pride ourselves on having some of the best schools in the nation, but in recent years have watched them slip toward

[mediocrity](#)

. Many parts of the state now have a

[public health crisis](#)

on their hands when it comes to drinking water.

The biggest problem of all is that Wisconsin appears to have lost its ambition to be first or best. For the time being the state seems content to be average or even bring up the rear. Wisconsin has, temporarily at least, lost its pioneering spirit. Past generations made Wisconsin a [state of firsts](#)

First in the nation to establish kindergartens, first to set up a vocational, technical and adult education system.

[First](#)

to pass a law providing workplace injury compensation, first to create an unemployment compensation program. First to create primary elections to take the business of nominating

candidates away from party bosses in smoke-filled rooms and put it in the hands of the people. First to base taxation on the ability to pay. Social Security was [cooked up here](#)

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Today, about the only way Wisconsin leads the nation is in the disappearance of the middle class. For Wisconsin to become what it has the potential to be, the state's pioneering spirit has to be rediscovered. We have to aspire to be first again.

For example, it should be Wisconsin's goal to be the first state in the nation to be fully powered by renewable energy. You know some state is going to get there. It's only a matter of time. Why shouldn't Wisconsin be that state? The race is on, but Wisconsin has [not yet shown it is serious about competing](#) in that race. Time for that to change.

Wisconsin needs to make education and job training as affordable for our kids and grandkids as it was for their parents and grandparents. We can settle for nothing less than debt-free college and vocational preparation.

Access to high-speed Internet and mobile phone service are 21st Century necessities that must be brought to every household. Everyone in Wisconsin should have them. Wisconsin ranks 49th in Internet speed. We should take all necessary steps to be first.

No one anywhere in Wisconsin should turn on a water faucet and be afraid to drink what comes out. Wisconsin should lead the nation in protecting water quality. No one in Wisconsin should be unable to go to the doctor when sick. Instead of turning down available federal funds for medical care, they should be used to leverage expansion of BadgerCare and ultimately make it a health coverage option for everyone in the state.

No more Wisconsin communities should be [forced to go backward](#) and [turn paved roads into gravel](#). Wisconsin now has the [worst roads](#) [fourth](#) in the nation, with

[nearly three-quarters of them in mediocre or poor condition](#)

. It should be our goal to have the best ones in the country.

It all starts with wanting to be a state of firsts again.

— *Mike McCabe*

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