



Tony Evers

Office of the Governor | State of Wisconsin

October 27, 2023

Greetings, Wisconsin educators, staff, and students!

I hope this letter finds you well and that you are having a great start to the school year. I am writing to you today because we are getting ready to decorate for the holiday season here at the Wisconsin State Capitol, and we sure do need your help!

The Capitol's holiday tree every year is filled with handmade ornaments from kids, students, and families from every corner of Wisconsin, transforming the Capitol Rotunda into the centerpiece of our holiday celebrations. You might remember that I send a letter each year asking Wisconsin educators, staff, and students to help us decorate the tree that is displayed in the Capitol. We're once again counting on your creativity and imagination to help bring the holiday spirit to life in the Capitol this year!

This year is extra special as we are celebrating 175 years of Wisconsin statehood.

While Indigenous peoples have lived in this region for thousands and thousands of years, on May 29, 1848, the territory known as Wisconsin officially became the 30th state of the United States. For 175 years, Wisconsin—from its Great Lakes coasts to its vast white pine forests and fruitful farmland—has made countless contributions to our country and the world.

As "America's Dairyland," we're the nation's leading producer of cheese, as well as cranberries, ginseng, and more. We're a champion of scientific research and agricultural innovation, a laboratory of democracy, and the birthplace of the Wisconsin Idea. We're the home of world-champion sports teams, roughly 462,000 small businesses, and more than 100 state parks, forests, and trails. But what really makes Wisconsin so special are the more than 5.8 million "Cheeseheads" who call it home, and we can't celebrate Wisconsin's birthday without celebrating the 175 years of leaders, trailblazers, innovators, dreamers, and hard workers that made us the state we are today.

So, I am excited to announce that the theme of the 2023 Wisconsin State Capitol Holiday Tree is 175 Years of Wisconsinites, and I encourage students to make ornaments that reflect what Wisconsin means to you and who Wisconsin is to you. Is it the Native Nations that have lived here since time immemorial? Is it the early miners who burrowed into the hills and earned us the nickname of the "Badger State"? Or is it famous Wisconsinites from the history books, like artist Georgia O'Keefe, William S. Harley, the co-founder of Harley-Davidson, or Vel Phillips, the first Black woman and person elected to statewide office in Wisconsin? Or it could be a person who has made a difference in your life, like your teacher, a parent, your librarian, a coach, a grandparent, or a local hero. Whoever it may be, this tree will serve as a reflection of the diverse communities, visionary leaders, and the extraordinary Wisconsinites to whom we owe so much as we celebrate the state's rich past, vibrant present, and boundless future as we go "Forward" together.

We ask that students make ornaments from non-breakable material. They must be strong enough to hold up during shipping and to be handled while the tree is being decorated. For these reasons, we recommend students

do not use fragile items or paper cutouts that may tear easily. We suggest ornaments that are 4-6 inches in size and made from a color that contrasts with the color of the tree so they can easily be seen and enjoyed by all visitors. Please attach a ten-inch loop of ribbon or string from which each ornament will hang.

We hope your school will share your classroom's experience making the ornaments with pictures and stories through Facebook and Twitter using #WICapitolTree.

Please send your ornaments to the address below by **November 22, 2023**. Also, please be sure to include the teacher's name and grade, school name, and address so that we may acknowledge your contribution.

Emily Gorman
Wisconsin Department of Administration
Division of Facilities and Transportation Services
17 West Main Street, Suite 119
Madison, WI 53703

If you have any questions about an ornament, please contact the Facilities Management Information Center at (608) 266-1485. Please note that ornaments will not be returned.

Students are also invited to attend the Capitol Holiday Tree Lighting Ceremony on **Friday, December 1, 2023, at noon at the Wisconsin State Capitol** to see their ornaments in action. The Capitol Holiday Tree will be on display through the end of the year, and students and their families are encouraged to visit the Capitol to share in the holiday spirit. Capitol hours and information are available here (<https://legis.wisconsin.gov/about/visit>).

We will gratefully accept any ornaments your school provides for the Capitol Holiday Tree. If there are extras, they will be shared with nursing homes, assisted living facilities, hospitals, and veterans homes to share the holiday cheer with others.

Thank you for helping to make the Wisconsin State Capitol beautiful and festive this holiday season.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Evers". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tony Evers
Governor