



Tony Evers

Office of the Governor | State of Wisconsin

November 8, 2024

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 Kathy and I need your help!

Each year, The Capitol's holiday tree 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. I send a letter to Wisconsin educators, staff, and students every year asking for help decorating our holiday tree here at the Capitol, and we're once again counting on your creativity and imagination to help bring the holiday spirit to life in the Capitol!

Next year, in 2025, we'll be celebrating 125 years of Wisconsin's state parks, so to kick off the celebration, I am excited to announce that the theme of the 2024 Wisconsin State Capitol Holiday Tree is 125 Years of Wisconsin's State Parks!

Our state parks exemplify our state's proud and rich history of conservation and protecting our natural resources. No matter where you go in Wisconsin, you are never very far from one of our world-class parks or trails. Wisconsin established our very first state park in 1900 with Interstate State Park along the St. Croix River in Northwestern Wisconsin. Interstate State Park was followed shortly thereafter by Peninsula State Park in Door County in 1909, and just two years later, Devil's Lake State Park in Baraboo. Today, there are 50 state parks across Wisconsin for kids and families to enjoy in all four seasons and for years and generations of adventurers to come.

To engage with this theme, I encourage students to make ornaments that reflect what Wisconsin's natural spaces mean to them and how Wisconsin's park system reflects who we are as a state and our shared history. Is it the awe-inspiring sights, like Big Manitou Falls at Pattison State Park or Balanced Rock at Devil's Lake State Park? Is it exploring Wisconsin's rich history with ancient ruins and Native American artifacts from 1000-1300 AD at Aztalan State Park or the structural remains of the state's once booming lime kiln industry at High Cliff State Park? Or is it Wisconsin's vast variety of native birds, plants, and wildlife? It could also be a fond memory of your favorite camping trip or outdoor activity, like hiking, skiing, kayaking, snowshoeing, swimming, or sharing s'mores and stories around the campfire with the people you love.

However you imagine it, this year's tree will serve as a reflection of our beautiful and diverse natural spaces, significant historical markers, and the unparalleled recreational and communal value of our Wisconsin State Parks. This year's tree will similarly reflect the extraordinary Wisconsinites committed to maintaining and protecting our state parks 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 that 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, 2024**. Also, please 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 **Thursday, December 5, 2024, 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