



## The New Wisconsin Idea: Reinventing Public Compassion for the 21st Century

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Twenty years ago, then-Wisconsin Governor Tommy G. Thompson ended welfare as we knew it. This promise was a popular campaign slogan for Bill Clinton in 1992. But on December 1, 1993, Thompson became the first American policymaker to end the New Deal and Great Society welfare programs and replace it with a new idea: empowering the poor to help themselves. The Thompson reforms proved widely successful both inside and outside the state. At home, the welfare rolls plummeted from 97,000 families on welfare to 7,000; better yet, poverty went down as jobs went up. This success inspired the national welfare laws to change and served as a model for similar reforms in England, Germany, Israel the Netherlands.

Published on the twentieth anniversary of the Thompson reforms, The New Wisconsin Idea tells the first insider's account of how the ideas were generated and how the programs were put in motion across the state. This part of the story offers useful lessons for any future policy reform experiment. It also gives a fascinating account of the national politics and global impact of Thompson's welfare-to-work success story. For example. Thompson is joined by British welfare chief Iain Duncan Smith in contributing an Afterword to this special edition to present ideas for the next round of transatlantic welfare reform.

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