

## Wisconsin Statute 19.59

**Establishes ethical rules prohibiting local public officials from using their office for personal gain, accepting gifts that could influence official actions, or conditioning official actions on political contributions.**

### Key Provisions

**Use of Public Office for Personal Gain:** Local public officials may not use their position to obtain financial gain or anything of substantial value for themselves, their immediate family, or associated organizations. This includes accepting free or discounted admissions to professional sports events if the official is part of a relevant local board. Exceptions exist for campaign contributions reported under Chapter 11 and for benefits from the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation or the Department of Tourism (s. 19.59(1)(a))

**Prohibition on Gifts and Influence:** Officials cannot solicit or accept anything of value if it could reasonably influence their vote, official actions, or judgment, or be considered a reward for official actions or inactions. This restriction does not prevent officials from engaging in outside employment (s. 19.59(1)(b))

**Political Contributions and Conditional Actions:** Local officials or candidates may not give, offer, promise, withhold, or condition their vote or official action on political contributions or other things of value for the benefit of a candidate, political party, or committee registered under Chapter 11 (s. 19.59(1)(br))

**Enforcement and Penalties:** Complaints can be filed with the County District Attorney or the Government Accountability Board (GAB). Violations may result in fines up to \$1,000 and the return of any improperly received benefits. Certain violations, such as conditioning official actions on political contributions, are treated as Class I felonies. Persistent ethical issues may require officials to resign or cease the conflicting activity, though the statute does not bar service outright (s. 19.59(8))

**Exceptions and Special Circumstances:** The statute allows officials to receive benefits on behalf of the state for activities promoting tourism or economic development, and it does not restrict campaign contributions that comply with reporting requirements. Officials may also represent personal interests if they properly step away from their official capacity during such activities

### Practical Implications

- Local officials must **avoid conflicts of interest** and ensure transparency in accepting gifts or benefits.
- **Political contributions** cannot be tied to official actions or votes.
- Officials should **document and report** any permissible benefits received on behalf of the state or for campaign purposes.
- Complaints and enforcement are handled through local DAs, GAB, or the Department of Justice if necessary.

Wisconsin Statute 19.59 provides a framework to maintain integrity in local government by clearly defining prohibited conduct, exceptions, and enforcement mechanisms, ensuring public trust in local officials and candidates.

## Wisconsin Statute § 27.08 — City Park Board Powers

**Wisconsin Statutes § 27.08** sets out the authority and responsibilities of a **city park board** (often called a board of park commissioners) in Wisconsin cities

### Key Provisions

#### 1. Creation of the Board

- Every city may, by ordinance, create a **board of park commissioners** (or another board as provided by ordinance).
- The board's organization is determined by the city's common council

#### 2. Powers and Duties

The board is **empowered and directed** to:

- **(a)** Govern, manage, control, improve, and care for all public parks, parkways, boulevards, and pleasure drives within or partly within the city's limits.
- Ensure the **quiet, orderly, and suitable use and enjoyment** of these areas by the public.
- Adopt rules and regulations to promote these purposes.
- **(b)** Acquire, in the city's name, for park purposes:
  - Money, real or personal property, or incorporeal rights/privileges by **gift, devise, bequest, or condemnation**.
  - **Limitation:** No condemnation for recreational trails, bicycle ways, bicycle lanes, or pedestrian ways.
  - Gifts or property transfers must be recommended by the board and approved by the common council.
- **(c)** With common council approval:
  - Buy or lease lands for park purposes within or outside the city.
  - Sell or exchange property no longer needed for park purposes.
  - Acquire lands by condemnation if needed for parks, parkways, boulevards, or pleasure drives.

#### 3. Purpose

The statute's intent is to give cities a structured mechanism to **manage, develop, and preserve public recreational areas** while ensuring oversight by the common council and adherence to legal limits

### Practical Impact

- **Cities** can establish and operate park boards to manage public green spaces.
- **Board authority** includes acquisition, improvement, and regulation of parks, but is subject to council approval and statutory limits.
- **Public benefit:** Ensures parks are maintained, accessible, and used in an orderly manner.