

Year End Report

December 7, 2024

Dear Friends,

Advancing and defending scenic principles in Wisconsin made 2024 another busy year. Confronting anti-scenic billboard bills, advocating to save monarch butterflies, and educating state legislature candidates, we actively engaged state legislators and the public.

Anti-scenic Billboard Bills Died in State Legislature

In a success for Scenic Wisconsin, bills intended to require that outdoor advertising signs which need to be removed to make way for highway reconstruction be transferred to a place elsewhere in the community died in committees as the 2023-24 legislative session came to a close in March. The bills would have required relocation by the DoT even if the signs do not conform to local ordinances. They would have undermined local community efforts at highway beautification.

The companion bills were the subject of public hearings in the Senate Transportation Committee in December and the Assembly Transportation Committee in January. Steve Arnold, former mayor of Fitchburg, speaking for CSW at the hearing of December, made an effective argument against the bill by citing his experience controlling billboards when he was mayor. Several CSW directors sent letters in opposition to the bills to the committees.

Butterfly Protection Bill Stalls in State Senate

A disappointment for Scenic Wisconsin, the bill that would have designated the monarch butterfly as an official state butterfly was killed in the Senate Committee on Government Operations, left off the agenda by the committee chairman. The bill was intended to bring needed public awareness and appreciation to the monarch, which is an endangered species that has lost 90% of its population since 1990. Monarch butterflies contribute to Wisconsin's scenic beauty, and they also help pollinate fruits and vegetables that are part of our food supply.

The bill, promulgated by Jack Voight, owner of Butterfly Gardens in Appleton, was actively supported by Citizens for a Scenic Wisconsin. While the bill was killed in committee, it did have 30 cosponsors, which indicates that the bill was respected in the legislature. The bill would have encouraged people to stop the loss of butterfly habitat.

The bill had been approved by the Assembly Transportation Committee by a vote of 8 – 0 in February and seemed well on its way to passage at that time. Voight recently said that he is determined to try for passage again next year.

Educating State-level Candidates on the Value of Scenery

In this election year, and with reapportionment of legislative districts leveling the playing field between Democratic and Republican voters in Wisconsin, CSW undertook to inform as many state-level candidates as practical on the value of scenery. Gary Goyke met with 36 state senate and assembly candidates, half Democratic and half Republican, and showed them our Facebook page and website. He advised them of the importance of scenery to our quality of life and to our tourism business. Citing the principles in our mission statement, Gary pointed out the detriment of increasing numbers of roadside billboards.

Help us Continue to Advocate for Wisconsin's Scenic Beauty

It takes financial support to continue to defend scenery against the self-serving actions of the well-funded outdoor advertising industry. Please contribute as much as you are willing and able to. Return the enclosed slip with your check in the enclosed envelope.

Alternatively, you can contribute electronically. Go to the CSW website scenicwisconsin.org and simply click on "membership" and follow the instructions.

Your past support has kept us going this far. Please help us keep fighting to make our mission statement a bigger part of Wisconsin's future.

We wish our friends and supporters a very Happy and Successful New Year!

Gary Goyke, President

Charlie Mitchell, Founder

The mission of Citizens for a Scenic Wisconsin is to preserve and enhance the visual character of Wisconsin. We believe that America's scenic heritage is fundamentally important to individual and collective well-being, to economic prosperity, to a healthy ecology, and to the quality of everyday life. Our objectives are to support and promote programs and policies that protect natural beauty in our environment, preserve landscapes and streetscapes, protect historic and cultural symbols such as barns, conserve trees, and improve the appearance of communities.