

ANNO MIRABILIS: 2002

A YEAR OF SCANDAL, UPHEAVAL, AND CHANGE

CHARLES J. SYKES

How remarkable has this year been?

Milwaukee is a town where years can go by without any major political changes. (Mayor Norquist's predecessor served 28 years as mayor.) But in 2002, every major political figure at both the local and state level — the governor, leaders of both the Assembly and the Senate, the mayor and county executive — fell from power, were defeated for re-election, were indicted, recalled, or resigned.

Decades can go by without a major scandal, and at the beginning of the year Wisconsin continued to enjoy a reputation as a state with clean politics and efficient government. But in 2002, scandals — over pension grabs, sex, and old-fashioned graft — roiled not only the Wisconsin Legislature, but also Milwaukee County Government and Milwaukee City Hall.

Nor was the upheaval limited to politics. Other institutions known for their stability, including the Catholic Church, saw dramatic — and unexpected — transitions of power.

For Wisconsin, 2002 marked the end of innocence.

Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Chvala was indicted on 20 felony charges, including



extortion; his colleague Brian Burke faced 18. Republican Assembly Speaker Scott Jensen and Majority Leader Steve Foti faced far less serious charges, but were also charged with felonies.

County Executive Tom Ament's political career was wrecked by public outrage over a pension grab. He resigned rather than face a recall that would almost certainly

have resulted in the ouster of one of the area's hitherto most entrenched politicians. Seven county supervisors, including Karen Ordinans, the chairman of the County Board, were ousted by voters in the same scandal.

Faced with a sexual harassment scandal, Mayor John Norquist announced he would not run for re-election. Milwaukee Alderwoman Rosa Cameron, indicted on federal corruption charges, resigned from the council, amid reports of an ongoing FBI probe into aldermanic corruption.

Nationally, the Catholic Church was rocked by scandals involving sex abuse by

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priests. But in Milwaukee the scandal reached all the way to the archbishop, Rembert Weakland, who resigned after it was revealed that he had authorized hush payments to a former lover.

In addition to the victims of scandal, 2002 also saw the defeat of incumbent Governor Scott McCallum, presaging the first partisan shift in state power in 16 years. By year's end every major department head in state government was gone.

Other major departures:

- Milwaukee Public School Superintendent Spence Korte
- Greater Milwaukee Committee President Bob Milbourne
- Milwaukee Sheriff Lev Baldwin
- Brewer CEO Wendy Selig Prieb
- Brewer GM Dean Taylor
- The executive director and artistic directors of the Milwaukee Art Museum
- The president of the Milwaukee Public Museum

The result was a dramatic turnover in power, and the rise of a new generation of leaders who are likely to exert influence well into the new century.

A partial list of the New Guard includes:

- A new governor, Jim Doyle
- A new speaker of the Assembly, John Gard
- A new majority leader in the State Senate, Mary Panzer
- A new Milwaukee County Executive, Scott Walker
- A new Archbishop, Timothy Dolan
- A new Milwaukee Sheriff, David A. Clarke
- A new superintendent of schools, William Andrekopolous
- A new head of the Greater Milwaukee Committee, Julia Taylor
- A new CEO of the Milwaukee Brewers, Ulice Payne
- A new GM for the Milwaukee Brewers, Doug Melvin
- A new president of the Milwaukee School Board, Jeff Spence
- A new chairman of the Milwaukee County Board, Lee Holloway
- Seven new members of the County Board
- A new president of the Milwaukee Art Museum, David Gordon

A generation's worth of political, religious, and social change — all in a single year.