

KATHERINE GEHL

Katherine M. Gehl is a founding leader of the national nonpartisan political innovation movement, a former CEO, an author, and a philanthropist.

She is the founder of The Institute for Political Innovation (IPI), a nonpartisan nonprofit organization founded in 2020 to contribute theory, scholarship, and strategy to catalyze model, modern political change in America. The first focus of IPI is supporting the cross-country movement for Final-Five Voting in American elections for the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate.

The mission of IPI is animated by Politics Industry Theory, the groundbreaking body of work Katherine pioneered. Politics Industry Theory looks at America's political system through an industry-competition lens in order to better understand its structure and problems, and, most importantly, to identify the most powerful and achievable solutions to those problems.

Politics Industry Theory has changed how the national reform community thinks about, talks about, and engages constituencies around "powerful-and-achievable" political change. Katherine's key contributions to this include the 2017 Harvard Business School report, "Why Competition in the Politics Industry is Failing America," and the 2020 Harvard Business Review book, "The Politics Industry: How Political Innovation Can Break Partisan Gridlock and Save Our Democracy." Both the report and the book were co-authored with renowned Harvard Business School professor Michael E. Porter, one of the world's most influential thinkers on management and competitiveness.

Katherine's work to better define the politics industry has sparked new strategies and organizations coast to coast who are working to convert theory into action. She collaborates with many of them, as her motivation to illuminate how politics really works was merely a means to change that system so it produces results in the public interest.

In 2018, Katherine co-founded Democracy Found, a cross-partisan initiative dedicated to establishing Final-Five Voting in Wisconsin for congressional elections. She is one of the leading advocates and supporters of cross-partisan coalitions supporting election innovation around the country. She was a supporter of the 2016 campaign to install ranked-choice voting in Maine. Today, she's one of the leading advocates and supporters of Final-Four Voting in Alaska, and a leading member of the cross-partisan coalition to pass ranked-choice voting in Massachusetts.

Looking forward, IPI will offer support to upwards of 10 state-based campaigns for Final-Five Voting and is leading the effort to broaden the discussion and scholarship around political innovation, from the implementation and evaluation of electoral innovation, to changing the rules around lawmaking in Congress.

Politics Industry Theory and the innovation it encourages are products, in part, of Katherine's decades of professional experience in high-level leadership across the private and public sector.

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Katherine is the former president and CEO of Gehl Foods, a \$250-million high-tech food-manufacturing company based in Wisconsin that she sold in 2015. Gehl Foods has a 120-year history: It began in a three-room-creamery in Germantown, Wisconsin, where Katherine's great-grandfather endeavored to create a better butter. Gehl Foods became one of the most innovative companies in its FDA-regulated peer group.

Before leading Gehl Foods, Katherine worked for Oracle Corporation and Bernstein Investment Research and Management. She remains active in business today, and is a member of several corporate boards, including The Marcus Corporation, and West Bend Insurance.

Katherine was confirmed in 2011 by the U.S. Senate to serve on the Board of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC). Prior to OPIC, she worked for Mayor Richard M. Daley's Office at the City of Chicago, and Chicago Public Schools. She remains connected to cause-oriented work, both as a member of several boards—Unite America, New America, and Business for America—and as an influential philanthropist. She is also the honorary co-chair of the National Association of Nonpartisan Reformers.

Katherine received a BA from the University of Notre Dame, an MA from the Catholic University of America, and an MBA from Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management. She is a proud mother of two children.