

# Robert m lafollette

[Countries](#), [United States](#)



Vocation: Politician- was youngest member of United States House of Representatives at age 29 in 1884, Senator of Wisconsin, Progressive party representative candidate (1912), one-time presidential candidate (1924).

Lawyer- district attorney in Wisconsin; ran a successful legal firm in Wisconsin.

### **Background:**

Family: Born into a poor but respectable family in Dane County, Wisconsin.

Father died eight months after Robert's birth. Mother worked extremely hard to support her four children.

Married Belle Case LaFollette and had 4 children including Robert M. LaFollette Jr. , and Philip Fox La Follette, both of whom followed Robert Sr. into politics. A gifted speaker, he considered pursuing a career in acting, but was instead driven to law by need to support family.

Education: Attended University of Wisconsin-Madison and University of Wisconsin Law School. He supported himself by teaching school and editing the school periodical at university.

Legal Life: Admitted as an attorney into the Wisconsin bar in 1880.

Within a year he had been elected district attorney of Dane County, Wisconsin. Was in United States House of Representatives for three terms, from 1884-1890. After tenure there, he returned to work at his prosperous legal firm. Became governor of Wisconsin in 1900. Moved from governor to United States Senate in 1906, where he served as an active member of the progressive division of the Republican Party until death in 1925. Disliked by

many members of the Senate due to his non-conforming ways and fiercely honest manner.

Defining Moment: A few months after his failure to earn re-election into Congress, LaFollette was approached by another state Republican leader who offered him a bribe to fix a court case against several former state officials (LaFollette did not accept). Contributions: As governor, he created corporate tax and implemented “The Wisconsin Idea”, a plan to use government as an agent of social and political reform. LaFollette worked on reforming taxes, railroads, banking, conservation, insurance, public service, and industrial problems.

When Woodrow Wilson won the election in 1912, he adopted many of LaFollette’s political ideas. They worked together to create the Department of Labor and the Federal Trade Commission. LaFollette fought for higher work wages and better working conditions. He also advocated women’s suffrage and civil rights for ethnic minorities. His ideas impacted entire 20th century. They led to laws benefiting the working class and even larger changes during presidential tenures of Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman, and Lyndon B. Johnson.