***Editor’s note:****This column is provided to Wisconsin Newspaper Association members by WisPolitics.com. Proper attribution in your newspapers is appreciated, including the byline “WisPolitics.com” and the tagline that is included at the end of the column.*

**Trek’s John Burke turns attention to presidential campaign with new book**

*By WisPolitics.com*

The year 2020 started out precariously for Waterloo-based [Trek Bicycle Co](https://www.trekbikes.com/us/en_US/). But things turned prosperous for the company in early summer, as many people began buying bikes as a healthy way to exercise and enjoy the outdoors.

Yet John Burke, president of privately held Trek, has more on his mind these days than soaring bicycle sales, which he predicted will broach $1 billion this year — a new record.

“It’s been an amazing year for Trek,” noted Burke in a recent interview with [WisBusiness.com](https://www.wisbusiness.com/2020/treks-john-burke-turns-attention-to-presidential-campaign-with-new-book/).

But Burke is worried about the direction of the country and especially concerned about the fate of the planet.

Burke said he strongly considered running for president as an independent, but abandoned that plan after determining he had little chance of winning. In the run-up, though, he penned the book, “Presidential Playbook 2020: 16 Nonpartisan Solutions to Save America.”

The book would have been his campaign platform.

Published by Little Creek Press, it is [available for purchase online](https://www.amazon.com/Presidential-Playbook-2020-Nonpartisan-Solutions/dp/1942586744) or as a [free PDF download](https://presidentialplaybook.com/).

He wrote a similar book in 2016, dubbed “[12 Simple Solutions to Save America.](https://www.amazon.com/12-Simple-Solutions-Save-America/dp/1942586132)” And in 2012, he authored “[One Last Great Thing : A Story of a Father and a Son, a Story of a Life and a Legacy](https://www.amazon.com/One-Last-Great-Thing-Father/dp/1476711658)” about his father, Trek co-founder Richard Burke, who died in 2008.

Burke also served as chairman of President George W. Bush’s President’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports and is a founding member of [PeopleForBikes](https://peopleforbikes.org/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank). His sister, Mary Burke — a former state Commerce Secretary under Gov. Jim Doyle — ran for governor in 2014 against Scott Walker.

An avid cyclist, Burke rode more than 1,000 miles on his bicycle in August, often pedaling 100 miles on weekend jaunts with his wife, Tania Burke, who heads Trek Travel, an independent bike touring company.

“I wrote this new book because I believe we need a bipartisan plan to move the United States forward,” Burke said in a recent interview.

“And in many cases, save this country. From what I can see, we are sadly lacking in leadership at the federal level.

“If you watched the conventions, you heard a lot of generalities and few specifics about what the candidates would do about gun violence, the nuclear threat, poverty in America and climate change. There was little talk about sacrifice.”

Burke declined to specifically criticize either President Trump or his opponent, former Vice President Joe Biden.

But he said Trump had thrown Trek, which makes some of its bicycles in China, “a number of curve balls” by imposing tariffs on imports from China.

“The economic cold war with China affects us, just like it does other companies, like Apple,” he explained, declining to say what percentage of Trek’s bicycles are made in China. “We source them all over the world. We build bikes here in Waterloo, in Taiwan, in Europe, in China and other countries in Southeast Asia.”

The suggestions in Burke’s new book range across the political map, though most could be described as progressive. On the conservative side, he would do away with federal government employee unions. But he’d ban all assault rifles, impose universal background checks on all gun sales and mandate gun licenses for owners. He’d also cut military spending, raise taxes to keep Social Security solvent, take steps to fight climate change and provide government health care for those who want it.

“You might describe my proposals as liberal or conservative, but I think they’re all nonpartisan because they are based on facts,” he said. “The way I framed the book was: ‘Here are 16 of our biggest issues, here are the facts that can’t be argued and here are the solutions,’ which I think are common-sensical.”

Burke said he views global warming as the most-pressing problem facing the United States and the globe.

“The lack of urgency that this country has shown in dealing with it is almost criminal,” he said. “People 30 years from now will look back and say ‘I can’t believe that generation had their heads so buried in the sand.

“If you think that COVID-19 is bad, climate change will be 100 times worse,” he said. “It’s just happening over a long period of time. The planet is clearly sick. Look at the pollution, the wildfires in California and the West, the ice caps melting and flooding along the eastern seaboard. It’s real.”

The Trek president said he also believes politicians underestimate the threat of nuclear war.

“Nobody is taking it seriously,” he said. “One group of atomic scientists estimate that we are 30 seconds to midnight in terms of starting a nuclear war. On my first day as president, I’d cut the U.S nuclear arsenal from 6,815 to around 300.”

Burke said another major issue for the country is the economic gap between the rich and the poor and Blacks and whites.

“The inequality is stunning,” he said. “I’ve put together a plan called ‘Every Kid Has a Chance,’ that includes free education and healthcare until age 22, making sure children have access to three meals a day and reforming our schools, which would include turning the bottom 1 percent into the top percent.”

Though some might consider his proposals a stretch, Burke said he’s not afraid to put his suggestions forward for review and even criticism.

“If FDR were alive today, he’d have 38 different ideas,” he said.

“I’m a super creative person, too. and I’ve got a lot of proposals. If they failed, I’d try something else.

One of them even has a bit of humor in it.

Until campaign financing can be changed to reduce the influence of corporations, political action committees and unions, he would require congressmen and women to wear jackets — much like NASCAR drivers — showing who is sponsoring them.

On a more serious side, Burke said he sees the country’s failure to adequately fund Social Security a huge problem.

“That’s an issue that affects 100 million people,” he said. “I could fix that in less than one minute by raising the retirement age to 70.

Currently, people’s incomes are taxed 6.2 percent to fund Social Security up to $130,900. That tax should be for whatever you make. It would also give you a pot full of money to address many other problems.”

Social Security’s trust funds are expected to run out by 2035, if no changes are made. Then, benefit checks for retirees would be cut by about 20 percent across the board.

Burke said he considers the country “bankrupt” when it comes to dealing with its problems.

*The Capitol Report is written by editorial staff at*[*WisPolitics.com*](http://wispolitics.com/)*, a nonpartisan, Madison-based news service that specializes in coverage of government and politics, and is distributed for publication by members of the Wisconsin Newspaper Association.*

*Copyright © WisPolitics.com*