

Return the Tax by Reducing the Debt

By Rod Goldhahn Vice President

There has been much discussion concerning the use of what is being called "excess revenue" from the Packer Stadium sales tax. I think "over taxation" might be a more accurate descriptor. If you are overcharged at a department store and bring it to their attention, they don't tell you to go back into the store and pick out some more things that you chose not to buy in the first place, to make up the difference. The store gives you the money back.

The voters passed the sales tax referendum for a specific purpose. Once those financial obligations were met, the tax was to end, which it did. As it is difficult to hit a moving target, too much tax was collected. That overage was not the Stadium District's money, so they rightfully tried to return it to the taxpayers via payments to Brown County and the municipalities. Following that thought process, those tax dollars were not paid to be used by the municipalities. Citizens were in essence overcharged, and the money should be returned. The most efficient way to return that money is via debt reduction.

The City and the Council have done a commendable job controlling spending and taxes,

while keeping Green Bay moving forward. Some of the projects coming before the City Council asking for funding, and others like them, are debated at budget time. They may be good projects, with passionate supporters, but they did not make the cut. The Council made the tough decisions because government cannot be all things to all people. Using this excess taxation on those special projects will be no different than raising our taxes by \$5 million because the city was not meant to have the money in the first place. It should be used to reduce the debt. Projects seeking funding should then be debated as part of the normal budget/funding process and be required to stand on their own merits.

Rod G.

MEETING LOCATION CHANGE

The BCTA has moved our monthly meetings to **Doug's Take 5 Grill** at the Four Seasons Tennis Club, 3600 Riverside Dr., South end of Allouez. Our new location has no stairs or steps, convenient parking, and a room to better accommodate speakers and conversation. There is a basic menu available, with a sandwich, cup of soup, and beverage for \$9 including tax and tip.

The BROWN COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION
In our 31st Year of Promoting Fiscal Responsibility in Government.

Things That Make Us Wonder.

Flint, Michigan is a Midwestern city about the same size, and other ways similar to Green Bay.

However, in recent months they have encountered big time problems with their water supply we couldn't even imagine here. For years, they had been purchasing water from Lake Huron through the City of Detroit. For some reason, probably price, their water utility decided to terminate the arrangement, and draw their water from the Flint River which flowed right through the center of town. It soon became apparent this was a bad, very bad decision.

It has not been made clear how much study or thought went in to the change over, or if they even had adequate filtration and purification facilities, but the water they were pumping into peoples homes was awful beyond imagination. In addition to the color, taste and smell, lead poisoning has become a health issue.

The immediate solution besides finger pointing was to rush in truckloads or bottled drinking water, and go back to the drawing board. The city blamed the Governor, (Snyder-R) for their woes, who reminded them it was really a local problem, even though he had previously appointed a Democrat as water commissioner.

In any event they have a situation largely of their making that will be very expensive to satisfactorily resolve.

While taken for granted, the municipal water supply is becoming a problem in many parts of the country. We are more fortunate here. Recall not too many years ago, when it appeared Green Bays wells were

inadequate, a study was made using the Bay, or even the Suamico River. The solution, though expensive, was the pipeline to Lake Michigan More, recently, a coalition of Green Bay suburbs ran a second line to the lake to provide for their needs.

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The IRS is probably the least favorite Government agency for many of us and is now becoming more like the American version of the KGB.

Perhaps this started with the President's plan to add 4,000 new IRS agents to enforce some the taxation, compliance, and other arcane rules associated with ObamaCare, or it may have come from the more recent accusations of paying undue attention to opponents of the President's party and agenda, and even requiring non-profit organization to furnish the Social Security numbers of donors. Now we learn hackers have accessed about 700,000 electronically filed returns, managing to receive other peoples refunds.

The IRS now discloses they have been making fewer audits this year, (about 1 out of 200) and as a result they are unable to recover as much additional revenue as a result. If this is the consequence of staff reductions, or agents being too busy with other projects was not mentioned.

Isn't it their duty to track down tax cheats? People who make large sums of money legally or otherwise, but neglect their duty to pay income taxes accordingly. The U.S. tax system works on a mistaken theory that everyone is honest and recognizes their obligation to pay taxes.

Maybe the IRS should team up with the FBI and track down more of the drug and crime profit money we are missing out on. It worked

against Al Capone back 1931.

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The Green Bay Police Dept. has outgrown their headquarters. For over 60 years they have operated from a converted super market on S. Adams St., and the cities population and their responsibility have doubled since they moved in. We keep expecting more of them, and realize their importance. They say they are still in the planning stage and no doubt are seeking a suitable central location with an announced price tag of \$40 Million.

Any thoughts or suggestions?

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On the same day the state announced it had returned to Brown County the excess sales taxes collected from residents and visitors for the Lambeau Field project, the Packers announced a \$42 Million contract extension for one of their outstanding young players.

We realize that the two items were in way connected, and that talent and money are necessary commodities in their business which they manage very skillfully. It is impossible to put a value on the publicity the Packers bring to our little city.

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We have mentioned it on previous occasions, but sometimes doesn't it seem that some of the multitude of publicized polls we are subjected to every day are intended more by the media to applaud their views rather than state a fact? For example, they have been providing daily percentages of hypothetical odds on Presidential match-ups since day one and after every debate as if it were a horse race, and telling you the results before its over.

Many busy people only read newspaper headlines, and draw their conclusions from that will take them if they continue reading. A recent

USA Today headline read to the effect. "50% of Americans Would Approve of A Muslim For President." The article covered a number of polls from various sources' and subjects, so we wonder just what the person who wrote the headline had in mind.

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It simply reads: Amendment I, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

That's it, the first amendment to the U.S. Constitution and the first of the "Bill of Rights" skillfully crafted by our founding fathers, and still remains as the law of the land after 225 years. One sentence consisting of about 40+ words, establishing religious freedom, the right to assemble, and freedom of the press.

No doubt the first amendment and bill of rights were instrumental in encouraging millions of people to emigrate to our country and contribute their talents to our society and place in the world.

If drafted by Congress today, it would no doubt take hundreds of pages of fine type covering definitions, rules, fines and penalties, with a compliance mechanism and make ObamaCare look simple.

There have been countless abuses and tests of the first amendment, many going all of the way to the supreme court, but the original intent had always prevailed. Most notably, matters separating church and state. It also does not establish the rules for a group to qualify as non-profit to become

exempt from property and income taxes, or for that matter does not specify special accommodations be provided at a workplace, for prayer time at the employers expense.

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Stricter gun laws are a very contentious political issue, with every single related incident being publicized to the max by those in favor.

Somewhat overlooked in the debates as a national problem in need of a solution in the fact that more people die each year from drug overdoses and illegal drugs than gunshot wounds either from family squabbles or mass shootings.

The same politicians blaming firearms for our problems, turn their backs on drug abuse, applauding the states with open marijuana laws and even suggest them on the national level, claiming it to be harmless

In the meantime, we seem to be unable to control the flow of much more potent drugs in to the country along with it's inherit problems of crime, misery, and billions of dollars changing hands under the radar.

Is calling for stricter gun control only a smokescreen for the real problem facing the country?

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Nobody wants a chemical factory in their back yard, but they have to be someplace. Dow Chemical, and DuPont, former rivals and by far the two largest chemical factories in the country with a combined worth of over \$130 Billion and 100,000 employees have agreed to merge forming Dow-DuPont.

Chemicals in some form or other are involved somehow in the manufacture of just about everything we make or eat, from gunpowder to toilet paper, and everything between.

It seems the Government used to



take a more cautious view of mergers, especially when national security or effect on other industries or the economy was a factor. These two giants already had a monopoly on the chemical industry, and their future plans are to split into three divisions, agricultural, industrial, and commercial, each which will be a monopoly by itself. The usual benefits of a merger were mentioned in the releases; More efficiency, combined sales forces and research, and more profit through less overhead. However, the bottom line is just as likely to be high prices due to lack of competition, and a reduction in their workforce. The big winners were the shareholders, but what's to stop China from coming in with a big check book sometime in the future if money is our only concern?

In recent years we have seen countless mergers: Notably in the Airline, Banking, Department Store, and grocery chain industries. In Wisconsin we have seen many old familiar employers merge with the promise of better things only to find your job had also gone elsewhere.

The legacy of airline mergers, for example, has been less choice, higher prices, less legroom, annoying luggage fees, and fewer meals and snacks. No wonder people are mad.

Where's Teddy Roosevelt when you really need him?

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The Presidential elections are still a long way off, and so far many of the candidates are looking worse than better thanks to the raucous conduct displayed at the televised debates. What should normally be an exchange of ideas to develop party platforms and to help voters determine the best qualified to lead the country has turned into crude mud-slinging chaos. .

This will also likely be the most expensive election in history. The jobs themselves don't pay that much on the outside, but the power and influence to campaign donors is enormous, and it is doubtful many deep pocket donors contribute to candidates without expecting something in return. Do Campaign finance laws make any difference?

Insofar as many big donor categories seem to lean towards one party or the other, not saying supporters of either better or worse than supporters of the other.

The trick seems to be in identifying groups of donors to the other party, and accuse them all over the map as being supported by, and in the pocket of "special interests."

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There were a number of Governors and public officials, including Gov. Walker, in the original line-up of Presidential wannabes, and we assume they all made arrangements to be away from their job and reimburse for expenses while campaigning.

We have read that Gov. Walker also reimbursed the state, out of his own pocket for security and travel expenses incurred during his short campaign.

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Reid Ribble has done an exceptional job representing the people of the Eighth Congressional District the past six years. It is very time consuming with lots of travel,

JANUARY MEETING NOTES

Tom Sladek reported on the December 17 and January 7 meetings held by the City of Green Bay to receive citizen input on how to use the approximately \$5 million the City of Green Bay will be receiving as part of the \$17.6 million distribution of the excess sales tax collections by the Stadium District. The funds can be used for three things: economic development, debt reduction, or property tax relief.

A representative of Green Bay Botanical Garden requested a \$250,000 – \$300,000 contribution toward a \$4 million project. Representatives of the Green Bay Bullfrogs requested \$4 million to build a facility for baseball and soccer games. The facility could also hold concerts. Numerous other requests for contributions were made.

At one meeting, BCTA President Richard Parins read a letter stating that the voters passed the referendum for a specific purpose and the money should be returned to citizens in either tax levy reductions or debt reduction. BCTA Director Rich Carlstedt questioned the return on investment for economic development. He feels that the money should go to debt reduction which would everyone in the community.

Rod Goldhahn reported that the sales tax opposition questionnaire is being prepared for Brown County Board candidates.

Brown County Treasurer Paul Zeller reported that Langlade County has a plan to eliminate its debt by 2017. The debt reduction effort is a nine year project.

Dave Nelson – Secretary

meetings, and running for re-election every two years. There are qualified candidates interested in replacing him so a problem may be replacing them

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There are about 1,250 accredited Colleges and Universities in the U.S., and they are all different. To help prospective students decide, several magazines and rating services compare key data from each and try to rate them accordingly. Data may include cost, average class size, graduation rate, aids and scholarships available, average instructor experience, etc. The results often vary from year to

year, and there often many personal factors involved as to choice.

One recent poll rated The UW-Madison at #41 for educational achievement and #7 as a party school. Still good numbers, but didn't we used to be the #1 party school?

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At the end of February, the U.S. National Debt reached Nineteen Trillion and 55 Billion Dollars, an increase of over a Trillion since we last reported about four months ago when it was still just under 18 Trillion. This equates to almost \$59,000 per U.S. Citizen, and \$160,000 for each taxpayer.

If this isn't a problem, what is? The candidates for President have become so obsessed with degrading each other that there has been scant mention made of the National Debt in the debates, but plenty of suggestions that may sound good to prospective voters if someone else pays picks up the tab.

At the present, interest rates are low, nice if want to borrow money, but not if you have money to borrow. It appears we are paying about 1.6% interest, so even a 1% increase could be disastrous. Who do we get to blame? Something to wonder about.

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To no surprise, many indications reinforce the so called "Affordable Care Act," or simply ACA or ObamaCare, has by no means lived up to it's expectations. Enrollment has been less than expected, insurance costs along with the cost of other health care related costs have increased, and some insurers have backed out entirely. Very few are better off.

The best thing, regardless of who is elected President would be to have all interests sit down, admit to a bad plan, try to identify and fix what's wrong or start all over. Better yet, just scrap it. It's a disaster.

As usual, lots if things to wonder about. **Jim Frink-BCTA** "Things That Make Us Wonder," consists of taxpayer related thoughts that occur to us from daily news events. We use reliable, published information and statistics. Some items are unimportant and probably not worth commenting about while others could easily be expanded to full length feature articles worthy of further study and action to protect our interests as taxpayers. We try to cover a wide variety of subjects in limited space and perhaps put a different spin on items from what you read in the papers or see

FEBRUARY MEETING NOTES

Green Bay Mayor Jim Schmitt spoke about several current issues.

Mayor Schmitt reported that when he spoke to the BCTA in March, 2014, he stated that he is focused on paying down general levy debt, providing high quality services, and further reducing the tax rate. He noted that all three of these goals have been accomplished. The general levy debt has been reduced from \$103 million to \$80 million during his term in office. He highlighted some new programs and development activities. Automated garbage and recycling are operational now, making for a cleaner, safer city, while saving the City more than \$900,000 annually. He noted that the City's low crime rate and educational opportunities are significant factors when recruiting people and businesses to the Green Bay area.

There are 200 people working on the Northland Hotel project now, a \$42 million project. The Cannery project on North Broadway is doing very well. The Meyer Theater project is adding vitality to the downtown area.

On the east side of Green Bay, a major development is proceeding on University Avenue near Fred Street. Festival Foods is the main player in this development. The Wisconsin DOT will be improving a hazardous situation in this area.

He explained that the city has a segregated account containing the \$5.3 million received from the distribution of excess sales tax collections by the Stadium District. There is a debate over whether this money should be used to pay down the general levy debt, reduce property taxes, or invested in projects.

He proposed investing \$4 million in an outdoor events center on city-owned brownfield property located at the south end of the Broadway district. He is confident he can raise another \$4 million-\$5 million of private money to complete this project. He he believes this project would create 200 jobs and attract a \$2 million restaurant.

Mayor Schmitt stated that he sent letters to the leaders of all Brown County municipalities, requesting that they allocate 5 percent of their sales tax refund dollars on recreational trail development.

Dave Nelson – Secretary

on TV. . However, one of our purposes is to encourage debate, as we realize there are two sides to every question. Comments or suggestions are welcome for inclusion in future "TAX TIMES."

Articles and views appearing in the "TAX TIMES" do not necessarily represent the official position of the Brown County Taxpayers Association. We want to encourage discussion and input on current issues of taxpayer interest and invite your comments or articles suitable for future "TAX TIMEES." Please send them to the BCTA, P.O. Box 684, Green Bay, WI 54305-0684 or email BCTaxTimes@gmail.com

The TAX TIMES

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BCTA Meeting and Events Schedule – MARK YOUR CALENDARS.

Thursday - March 19, 2016. BCTA Monthly Meeting.
12:00 Noon. Doug's Take 5
Speaker: GB Police Chief Andrew Smith

Thursday - April 21, 2016. BCTA Monthly Meeting.
12:00 Noon. Doug's Take 5

BCTA monthly meetings are held the Third Thursday of each month, 12:00 Noon, at Doug's Take 5, 3600 Riverside Drive, Allouez.

Meetings are open to the public. BCTA Members, their guests and other interested parties are cordially invited to attend and participate in our open discussions.

COST: \$9.00, Payable at meeting. Includes lunch, tax & tip.
Call Tom Sladek – 499-7701 for information or to leave message.

March -
April
2016

“Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn't pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same” . . . Ronald Reagan

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New Members are
Always Welcome.
Visit our website
www.BCTAxpayers.Org
for Details.**