

The Electoral College

Richard Parins

Over the past few weeks, I have noticed numerous online reports, opinions and blog discussions calling for the elimination of the Electoral College, an antiquated formulation (their opinion) for electing the President of these United States. If any of you have studied the early writings and discussions of our First Americans, first United States citizens, there is a robust debate about the manner in which the President should be elected-See Federalist Paper 68, the arguments for and against by Hamilton and others doing the cleanup of unfinished Constitutional business.

Hamilton and the other founders believed that the electors would be able to ensure that only a qualified person becomes President. They believed that with the Electoral College no one should be able to manipulate the citizenry, and the Electoral Vote system would act as a check on an electorate that might be duped and the result would reflect "the sense of the people." Hamilton and the other founders did not trust the population to make the right choice and their prescient observation has been borne out several times. He argues that electors will be protected from bias since they do not hold any other political office and are separated from electors from other states. The founders also believed that the Electoral College had the advantage of being a group that met only once and thus could not be manipulated over time by foreign governments or others. Does this bring up our current problems of foreign collusion and interference in our elections?

The electoral college is also part of compromises made at the convention to satisfy the states with smaller populations. Under the system of the Electoral College, each state had the same number of electoral votes as they have representatives in Congress, thus no state could have less than 3. The result of this system is that in this election the state of Wyoming cast about 210,000 votes, and thus each elector represented 70,000 votes, while in California approximately 9,700,000 votes were cast for 54 votes, thus representing 179,000 voters. Obviously, this creates an unfair advantage to voters in the small states whose votes actually count more than those people living in medium and large states."⁽¹⁾
www.historycentral.com

While there are clear problems with the Electoral College and there are some advantages to maintaining such a system and changing it is very unlikely as it would take a constitutional amendment ratified by 3/4 of states to remove this confirming entity. It is hard to imagine the smaller states agreeing. There is, however, a movement to aggregate a State's electoral votes based solely on the popular vote and further creating a bloc of these Electoral votes with States of similar conviction, amendments have been passed in 23 states to construct a National Popular Vote Interstate Compact.

This is a discussion seminal to our Republic, represented by the 1782 inscription affixed the Great Seal of the United States, "E Pluribus Unum," "Out of Many, One." The Idea, the distinguishing characteristic of this Nation is the aggregate of States make up One Nation. If a few States by their sheer numbers of citizens can elect our President, it no longer may be the "President of the Many" but the President of a few states of large populations and the Republic will no longer exist. I understand there are many who wish that very notion to become fact, creating the pure democracy this Nation is not nor was ever designed to be. The deception wrapped up in the notion, "well, the vote in Wyoming is more equal in weight to the vote in the Queens, or The Tenderloin District of San Francisco, is the insipid nature of a deceptive argument. The geographical disproportion of voters begets the necessity to balance the greater number through the Electoral College or less populated States need not show up if only the aggregate votes of the most populated areas of the Nation will decide the National vote for President and the notions of those earliest Americans who envisioned the construct of this Nation will be tossed into the gutter. . God help those who cannot see this; or they no longer want the United States to exist as it has for nigh on 250 years, a Republic.

Contact your State and National Elected Officials to let them know your thoughts on this issue. Remember the critical place our relatively smaller State occupied during the 2016 Presidential Election and the perils of ignoring the smaller States.

MARCH MEETING NOTES

State Senator Andre Jacque shared his perspective on the upcoming state budget and the new administration. He explained that there is no sense of urgency about coming to an agreement with Governor Evers because, in Wisconsin, the base state budget remains in effect until a new state budget is passed by the Legislature and approved by the governor. Given the Governor's ideas for new spending, the legislature is not feeling any urgency to include his proposals in a new state budget. In fact, Wisconsin taxpayers might well be better served by keeping the base budget for the next four years.

Including the governor's new spending proposals in a new state budget would amount to about \$1,000 of new spending for each man, woman, and child in the state. The governor is advocating for the repeal of right to work laws and restoring prevailing wage laws, both items that will increase the cost of government operations and therefore increase the burden on Wisconsin taxpayers. In addition, he wants to increase the minimum wage to fifteen dollars per hour, which would place an additional burden on Wisconsin businesses.

Representative Jacque explained the importance of the Wisconsin Supreme Court race. At present, the court has a majority of constitutional conservatives. If an activist justice is elected this year, it is almost certain that the conservative majority will be lost in 2020 due to political circumstances. This would likely lead to a loss of many of the political reforms of the last eight years. In addition, it would lead to activist gerrymandering of voting districts following the 2020 census, which would have consequences lasting for decades.

John Jahnke, a candidate for the Green Bay School Board, presented his ideas and concerns about serving on the Green Bay School Board. He called for more transparency and openness on the part of the board. He stated that he would be an advocate for including the needs of all students in district planning and operations. He noted that hiring a new superintendent will set the direction of the district for many years.

Dave Nelson - Secretary

**Brown County State Legislators
2019-2020**

Senate Districts - to email use:
Sen.(last name)@legis.wi.gov

- 1-Sen. André Jacque
- 2-Sen. Robert Cowles
- 30-Sen. Dave Hansen

Assembly Districts - to email use:
Rep.(last name)@legis.wi.gov)

- 1-Rep. Joel Kitchens
- 2-Rep. Shae A. Sortwell
- 4-Rep. David Steffen
- 5-Rep. Jim Steineke (Majority Leader)
- 6-Rep. Gary Tauchen
- 88-Rep. John Macco
- 89-Rep. John Nygren (Co-chair, Joint Finance Committee)
- 90-Rep. Staush Gruszynski

Things That Make Us Wonder.

So far, Gov. Evers has hit the ground running ----- right into a brick wall, otherwise known as the state budget. He has suggested a number of changes to our unemployment laws which may sound good but can prove expensive for business and are one of the reasons business establishments choose to locate elsewhere. Especially in the case of manufacturers.

Evers also wanted to add another \$2.5 Billion to the budget for school building projects, He could probably justify a need, but for every billion added, something must be cut or a new source of revenue must be established.

The budget is subject to approval by the Governor and Legislature, they must also agree on and content Stay tuned.

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Has the Wisconsin DNR discovered a new way to save money and operate more efficiently by farming out their routine duties? We recently noticed that renewal notices

APRIL MEETING NOTES

Attorney Frank Kowalkowski spoke about Real Estate Taxes and Native American Lands. He is associated with von Briesen & Roper, a leading Wisconsin law firm. He is considered to be among the top dozen tribal law attorneys in the United States. He has done work all across the US. He works with government entities colocated with Native American reservations. Where there is more than one unit of government occupying the same land area, conflicts of jurisdiction and taxation are bound to occur.

One issue emerging is whether or not Native Americans holding land in fee within reservation boundaries must pay property taxes to local units of government. Fee land is land not subject to restriction. Sometimes a tribe, or individual tribal members, own land in fee within reservation boundaries. Usually, tribes hold land in trust and have jurisdiction over that land. Trust land is technically owned by the US government and is not subject to taxation by local units of government.

Attorney Kowalkowski explained that there is a case filed in the Western District of Wisconsin federal court in November 2018 challenging whether Native Americans or tribes holding land in fee must pay real estate taxes on that land. Four tribes are suing the governor, the Wisconsin Department of Revenue, and eleven separate townships in northwest Wisconsin. In total, the four

tribes have potentially over 300,000 acres to dispute.

Since Wisconsin has the highest reliance on property tax revenue of the Midwestern states, losing the revenue from real estate taxes on fee land owned by Native Americans would be a serious blow to many Wisconsin local units of government.

The resistance to removing Native American fee land from property tax rolls for local governments is being shouldered by townships and villages, which have the least resources for legal expenses in these complex cases. Cities, counties, and school districts appear to be uninterested in potential significant revenue losses if these court battles are lost. Fourteen percent of the City of Green Bay land is within the boundaries of the Oneida Indian reservation. Yet, the City does not have a history of opposing the Oneida Tribe's periodic actions to place fee land it purchases within the boundaries of the reservation into federal trust, thereby exempting it from taxation by local government entities.

Equal to the taxation issue is the issue of jurisdiction. Police and fire protection, road maintenance, zoning, and public education are functions requiring agreement on financing, direction, and accountability.

Dave Nelson - Secretary

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for boats and recreational vehicles were mailed from a Minnesota address. We still have to mail our checks to Wisconsin though.

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We will all miss the Shopko stores, and we're proud that they called Green Bay their home. They leave a legacy of generous donations to the community. Many of which may otherwise have ended up at taxpayer expense.

Unfortunately, there have been a number of high profile retailer bankruptcies in recent years, resulting in a lot of vacant shopping malls throughout the country. It isn't just Shopko, and it seems that

just about all retailers are eliminating employees. Whether this is a result of simply cutting expenses or a shortage of workers is hard to tell. We will see what happens if the minimum wage is increased.

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We can agree that recycling as it exists is a good idea to help conserve our resources and eliminate the need for other more expensive methods of getting rid of the mountains of debris we create each day. There have been reports, however, that some materials have to pile up faster than they can be processed. Many materials are difficult to separate because they are bonded together. How about getting together to develop

(especially on food products) packaging that is more suitable for recycling. If recycling is going to save the world, it might even be worth a tax break or two.

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Congratulations to Milwaukee for being selected to host the 2020 Democratic National Convention. It should be quite an affair and generate a lot of attention to Wisconsin. We are sure logistical problems with housing and transportation with Mayor Barrett's new streetcar system will be resolved in time for the expected thousands of visitors.

One of the first chores of the delegates will be to prepare a par-

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ty platform on which to proceed. All or at least some of the announced candidates for President has announced support for items on the following list. This should be no problem as a number of their Presidential hopefuls already have been announcing their ideas to gauge public reaction if nominated.

So far, some of these platform candidates include:

Imposing a 70% income tax on those earning over \$10 Million, a 2% wealth tax on net worth over \$50 Million, a "Green New Deal", a \$15 Minimum wage, legalize "born-alive" abortions, Govt. restitution for slavery, repeal laws against homeless camps, Universal family leave, breaking up banks, erosion of civil society, not wearing MAGA caps, legalize marijuana as much as possible on a National basis, boycott Fox news, opposing the first and second amendments, eliminate the Electoral College, Free college tuition for all, student loan forgiveness, publicly funded pre-K childcare, more gun control, Medicare for all, expansion of Medicaid, abolish ICE (Immigration Control and Enforcement.), open our borders and encourage sanctuary cities, allow amnesty for illegal immigrants, redraw voting district maps, impeach President Trump or at least keep harassing and criticizing him in every way possible, and

from candidate Bernie Sanders (and others) - More Socialism.

That's about it for now, but we are sure more ideas will surface as the convention gets rolling. Their next order of business will be the nomination of viable candidates for the offices of President and Vice-President of the United States of America from the assembled gaggle of announced candidates. Maybe it will be a complete surprise.

* * * * *

Partisan politics, along with a variety of political parties, and Presidents from various backgrounds with different constituencies and interests have survived and cooperated through 243 years of history in this country. This has occurred even when one party or the other has held a huge majority. Thanks to our countries (former) bi-partisan ability to discuss, negotiate, and compromise on solutions there has always an amicable solution on was best for the country and its people.

As usual, there are a lot of important issues facing our elected officials in Washington, but all our biased news seems to bring us is anything they can say, negative or contradictory to the President, regardless of facts or importance. Most people should be able to smell a rat when and if there is one on their own.

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The Wisconsin State Constitution occupies 40 pages of the Wis-

consin Blue Book and clarifies the state's relationship to the Federal Constitution as it applies to the matter at hand. It is the duty of the State Supreme Court to interpret legal matters as they apply to these standards.

Although Supreme Court Justices are supposed to be non-partisan, many of the cases they handle are not. The money spent, and negative advertising used in the recent Wisconsin supreme court race did little to enhance the dignity of the job. Congratulations to Justice Hagedorn.

* * * * *

Dairy farming is and has been the backbone of Wisconsin's agricultural industry, and has made our state famous accordingly. In recent years, however, there has been a dramatic decrease in the number of family-run farm operations and it is starting to affect the economy big time.

There are a lot of reasons and excuses for this. Large factory farms combining the resources of, but eliminating the need for several smaller farms have become popular. Highway construction and

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just plain urban sprawl have taken its share of farmland.

However, the biggest problem may be that it is no longer a profitable, or popular business in which to engage. The price and value of milk has stayed low, while the cost of producing it keeps rising. The cost of labor keeps going up even faster, and the long hours and hard work required to discourage today's farm children taking over the farm. As a candidate for government aid, farming may rate close to the bottom. It seems to be more of a problem than just supply and demand

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There was a recent scandal involving wealthy citizens paying huge amounts to supposed contacts able to get their children enrolled in elite colleges, which was the wrong approach. They should use the old-fashioned way. Either train your child to become a superstar all American athlete, or be rich alumni with a few campus buildings bearing your name.

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The Democrats can't get over the fact that Trump was elected President but haven't said we would be better off with Hillary. The bottom line is strictly power. Unfortunately, he has come across as un-Presidential at times but has had his hands full with all the snipping at his feet.

That said, it seems the Democrats have put a lot more time and energy into being obstructive than with working together, compromising, and setting an example of their leadership qualities.

An example is the Mueller report. This has dominated the news for several months, but has accomplished nothing so far except cost millions of dollars and preventing a lot of government employees from doing something more productive

Now they want to go after his income tax returns, and no doubt there are some gray areas to question. This is the job of the IRS to handle and discipline if not done according to rules. Hillary could also be suspect to skeletons in the closet.

Yes, We have a right to expect our elected officials set high standards of conduct by example.

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Forbes magazine has released its annual list of the world's billionaires, This year they identified 2,153 individuals from all over the world with Jeff Bezos, CEO of Amazon, at the top with a net worth estimated at \$131 Billion.

That's nice, but Bezos might have to learn to live more frugally. He just went through a messy divorce, and his ex was awarded 25% of his Amazon stock, valued at over \$35 Billion. In any event, it would be about \$35 Billion more than Bezos or Amazon paid in fed-

eral income taxes last year or proceeding according to many publicized reports that he was able to take advantage of tax laws.

Perhaps the hate-Trump crowd should demand the IRS give them Bezos' tax returns so they can pick him apart. If even partially true, it really makes us wonder.

* * * * *

As usual, there are lots of things to wonder about.

"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 additional 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 some items from what you read in the papers or see on TV. We acknowledge that some of the views and comments expressed in this column may be contrary to that of some of our readers, However, one of our purposes is to encourage debate and we realize there are two sides to every question. Comments or suggestions are welcome for inclusion in future "TAX TIMES."

Jim Frink - BCTA

Monthly Meetings @ The Village Grille

Monthly meetings are held at **The Village Grille**, corner of Hoffman and East River Drive, Allouez. The location has no stairs or steps, convenient parking, and a room to better accommodate speakers and conversation. There will be three selections from which to choose lunch - each one will be priced at \$12 (including tip.) Lunch is at 12:00 noon with monthly speakers presenting.

The TAX TIMES

Brown County Taxpayers Association
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Meeting Location

The Village Grille, Allouez

BCTA Meeting and Events Schedule – MARK YOUR CALENDARS.

Thursday - May 16, 2019 BCTA Monthly Meeting.
12:00 at The Village Grille, Allouez

Thursday - Jun 20, 2019 BCTA Monthly Meeting.
12:00 at The Village Grille, Allouez

BCTA monthly meetings are held the Third Thursday of each month, 12:00 Noon, at , at The Village Grille, 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: \$12.00, Payable at meeting. Includes lunch, tax & tip.
Call Tom Sladek – 499-7701 for information or to leave message.

May - Jun 2019

