

Our Nation's Single Biggest Issue

Rich Heidel BCTA-President

A Hobart constituent of mine recently wrote a letter to Congressman Mike Gallagher, expressing her concern over the national debt. Our national debt is now at approximately \$23 trillion, bankrupting our nation and hog-tying our children, their children, and THEIR children into the unforeseen future. She shared with me the response she received from Gallagher. (Yes – the BCTA will name names when it comes to spending our money to further public policy!)

After agreeing with this lady and bemoaning this burden, Gallagher makes a couple of interesting comments in his letter:

"In 2016, sixty-nine percent of all government spending was mandatory, which means existing law required the government to allocate a set amount of funds to specific programs. This mandatory spending mainly consists of four components: Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and interest on the national debt....The Congressional Budget Office projects that about 81 percent of all government spending will be mandatory by the year 2040. This means that Congress will only have authority on less than 20 percent of all federal spending. The primary contributor to this dangerous trend is the growing national debt that will result in an increased amount of interest the government owes each year."

If things keep going in this direction, pretty soon Congress won't have authority over any federal spending and will have worked itself out of a job! Furthermore, Congress has authority over - and responsibility for - the entire budget. For them to claim otherwise is to abrogate that responsibility.

Congressman Gallagher goes on to say:

"As your Representative in Congress, I am committed to getting our country's fiscal house in order by working with my colleagues to cut wasteful spending, streamline government, and get our economy growing again so we can balance the budget and pay down the national debt. You will be pleased to know that I have cosponsored legislation that would establish a balanced budget amendment to the United States Constitution. I believe a balanced budget amendment is a necessary step towards restoring fiscal discipline and holding our elected officials accountable. We cannot continue ignoring the looming threats of our growing national debt."

Yet, "ignoring the looming threats of our growing national debt" is exactly what Congress IS doing! I have nothing against a balanced budget amendment to the US Constitution, but why do we need a Constitutional amendment for Congress to do what it already has the power and responsibility to do? If you want to dispel the darkness, why do you need an operating manual to flip a light switch? It's obvious that the entitlement portions of the budget MUST be reduced. Furthermore, who has any confidence in Congress' sense of obligation to the US Constitution these days?

Congressman Gallagher has previously stated that he's term-limiting himself after three terms. Thus, he shouldn't have any concerns about re-election after six years if he were to become the fiscal hawk necessary to legislate a reduction in entitlements.

I'm not criticizing Gallagher as much as I'm criticizing the entire Congress. If Congress doesn't take this challenge on, the problem will solve itself. The very future of this nation is far "more mandatory" than are the entitlement programs in the federal budget.

Rich

JULY MEETING NOTES

Representative Macco Explains State Budget Actions

John Macco, 88th District Representative to the Assembly, spoke about the budget process in Wisconsin this year. The 88th Assembly District includes a large part of eastern Brown County. Representative Macco chairs the Assembly Ways and Means Committee, which is responsible for determining how to raise the \$36 billion the state spends annually. He is also Vice-Chair of the Joint Committee on Audit.

Representative Macco explained that the state spends about \$100 million a day and it takes about \$105 million to operate the City of Green Bay for a year. It takes about \$97 million to run UWGB for a year. The state spends that in less than one day. Brown County spends about \$250 million annually. The state spends that in two and a half days. Almost every department from Corrections to Transportation is spending a billion dollars or more each year.

The cooperation between the Senate and the Assembly has been extraordinary this year. They were literally having joint caucus sessions and private meetings to resolve budget issues.

There were two different types of vetoes that the governor could make, literally editing out things, and editing/creating new sentences with new meanings. The Administration found a way to

create new meanings. There was some education spending that allowed so much money for pupils in the first year and so much money for pupils in the second year. The governor deleted "*for the second year*" and just left the word "*and*." He couldn't raise the number, but he could lower it. Then it became the first number plus the second number for EACH of the next two years, which increased spending by \$85 million.

The Brown County District Attorneys Office, with a 3,000 case backlog, desperately needs additional help. With some hard work, additional positions for assistant district attorneys were designated for Brown County in the budget approved by the Senate and the Assembly. Governor Evers deleted the "*for Brown County*," releasing these desperately needed positions to be reassigned, most likely to Milwaukee County or Dane County.

Representative Macco supports creating an entity called Wisconsin First to discuss the five pillars: comprehensive tax reform, comprehensive budgetary reform, comprehensive education reform, comprehensive transportation reform, and comprehensive healthcare reform. He stated that his goal is to make tax rates lower and simpler. The Wisconsin sales tax is an example of complexity. The state collects \$5 billion of sales tax revenue annually and there are \$6 billion of sales tax collections that are exempt.

Dave Nelson - Secretary

Things That Make Us Wonder.

With help from a U.S. Supreme Court decision, it will not be necessary for those taking the 2020 National Census to ask respondents whether they are a U.S. Citizen or not. While this omission may be considered a big victory for the folks in la la land who favor open borders and automatic citizenship if caught. However,

assuming the final body count would be the same if they ask the question or not, there are a lot more questions than answers if the census is to be worth the money.

For example, the number of Congressional representatives for each state is based on population figures. While the number of representative's is kept constant, adjustments to the number assigned to each state can be made based

on census figures. In other words, if the number of bodies counted by census takers next year, which appears to be the direction we are headed and regardless of whether or not they declare U.S. Citizenship or not, could be used as the actual official population, and basis for more or fewer Congressional Seats. In addition to making identification and proper and

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AUGUST MEETING NOTES

Brian Johnson, Executive Director of On Broadway, gave his perspective of his organization's operations and activities. He also represents the Ninth Aldermanic District on the Green Bay City Council.

On Broadway is a Wisconsin Main Street Program, which means that it follows the National Main Street approach. On Broadway is one of the early programs to be brought into the Main Street Program. Additionally, On Broadway is a Business Improvement District (BID). The City of Green Bay has four of them: On Broadway, Old Main Street, Downtown, and Military Avenue. A BID is a group of property owners that voluntarily agree to be assessed on their property taxes. That money goes into a pool that is overseen by a separate board of directors that determines how that money's going to be invested. That funding is used to achieve one or two goals: Higher rent rates and higher occupancy rates.

On Broadway is committed to recruiting volunteers. We want to have people involved in our organization. We need to be healthy. We need to be stable financially. We are not government funded; we get zero taxpayer dollars. The BID only accounts for six percent of our total budget. That means that we have to fundraise for the rest, whether it be sponsorships, doing events where we

generate revenue, or writing grants. So, we are for the most part, self-sufficient. We have a total of about 52 events that we do throughout the year. On Broadway is committed to art, encouraging artists to display their talents, brightening the district with murals and other displays.

Residential housing is also very important to us. We know that what goes on in our neighborhoods directly affects the commercial corridor, which is why we've taken an interest in what's happening with the housing stock.

We have already seen \$35 million of investment in the railyard site. And we expect it to top out over a hundred million dollars. So, this is a much better use of this type of downtown property than a Walmart.

The Shipyard is basically comprised of four different areas: The North, which is available for developing, the Southwest where the actual Didion investing is going to be, the Broadway area where the City acquired property, and then the residential neighborhoods on the near West side.

Discussing City issues. Alderman Johnson explained that he supported the wheel tax because it was the only way to have an immediate impact to generate revenue for roads because of the levy limits for the City and with the contingency that the City develop a five-year capital spending plan.

Dave Nelson - Secretary

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established procedures for obtaining citizenship status a farce this could give states like California that is full of illegal aliens even more seats in Congress at the expense of states like Wisconsin.

Presently employers are required to examine a birth certificate, valid Social Security card, or drivers license to establish Social Security eligibility. We might as well throw that out of the window also.

Accurate population figures are important for a lot of reasons, and in every country in the world there is a difference between citizenship, illegal alien, or "just visiting."

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The epidemic of mass shootings in recent years makes us all sick and solutions such as gun confiscation in a nation of 340 million people would be difficult as well as unpopular.

Is it possible our obsession with bang-bang video game and all the casual shooting on popu-

lar TV shows and Hollywood, movies is also to blame?

* * * * *

It is easy to call someone a "racist" for what may have been a slip of the tongue. Politicians have to be very careful about what they say or do these days, as the other side of the aisle has experts who will either interpret or misinterpret anything you do or say.

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There is always some group or interest on the local, state, or

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national level proposing and petitioning for some new law which they claim will make life better and easier for all of us. First thing though, it must be in accordance with the U.S. Constitution in order to proceed. An interesting item in the latest "Readers Digest" disclosed that since the constitution was ratified in 1786 there have been over 11,000 requests filed for amendments. However after the original 10 "Bill of Rights" Amendments there have been only 26 amendments made to the original document including 2 for the imposition and repeal of prohibition. Chalk one up for our founding fathers.

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We would like to believe our elections for candidates for public office are run honestly, and reflecting the beliefs of the majority of voters whether we personally agree or not.

The National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA) set forth standards including qualifications, registration, poll staffing and conduct, vote counting and reporting, etc However "judicial Watch. Inc." which usually keeps things strait, made a survey in 2017 indicating in over 450 counties in 38 different states over a million people voted in excess of the number actually registered to vote. This report had nothing to say about how districts were drawn on a

map and Wisconsin was not one of states in violation of election laws,

The gist of the story was there are a lot of ways to get around Federal election laws, and the best way to defend your rights and the integrity of the system is to learn how the system works and volunteer as a poll worker or poll watcher.

* * * * *

Impeaching a standing U.S. President is hardly a recreational sport, but some of the more outstanding Democrat wannabees for the job claim they would give it a try if they could. Even if such an action could bring instability and chaos to the country, and probably the world for that matter.

The Constitution provides for impeachment in cases of treason, bribery, or other high crimes so building a case could be a challenge. We will all acknowledge Mr. Trump has brought a new dimension to the office of President somewhat different from his predecessors and history will be the final judge. So far, while the tariff war with China plays out, unemployment and food stamp recipients are down, and virtually all other economic statistics are up.

* * * * *

So far Gov. Evers has eliminated a number of items from the Republican budget he was presented with and added items of his own such as more money for schools and education. What

about more money for highways? Simple! Just add \$95.00 or so to everyone's annual registration fees and save gas tax increases and toll roads for later. The new wheel tax will also be on your license renewal statement. These items will help pay for a lot of orange barrels.

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The very suggestion of a \$15.00 minimum wage no doubt is intended to attract young voters more than be a practical reality for the rest of the country. The very suggestion leaves a lot of questions beginning with why do we need a mandated minimum wage in the first place? The next idea from Washington would be price control and we all know what a lousy idea that has been.

The first minimum wage was established in 1938 at \$0.25 per hour. Realizing that a quarter an hour was not quite enough, Congress increased it to .30 cents in 1939 and .40 cents in 1945, at the end of World War II. Regular increases followed until the present rate of \$7.25 an hour was established in 2009

While we certainly do not advocate returning to a 1930's

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www.BCTAxpayers.Org
for Details.**

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

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lifestyle and economy, and can agree that an adequate income for all is what keeps the economy running is mandating wages the best solution? Where does the Billionaire or other highly paid individual fit into the picture? Should government also mandate a maximum income to level the playing field?

In addition to unprecedented technical advances two factors complicating economics in recent years could be #1, our huge and growing National debt, and #2, Inflation, which is constantly raising the prices of everything we do or buy.

Presently the National Debt is about 70 times what it was in 1938. Is it possible that our governments careless attitude towards spending and borrowing more money to spend contributes to inflation? Some economists and political leaders say this is good for the country but can offer few valid reasons why. A problem is that a good portion of our taxes already goes to paying off our debt.

How long must we keep rais-

"We live in a stage of politics, where legislators regard the passage of laws as much more important than the results of their enforcement."

William Howard Taft

ing wages to keep up with inflation? It can't last forever. Could a person raise a family on todays minimum wage? Definitely not. Is it right for the government with a huge, expensive workforce keeping each other busy to mandate everyone else's wages. No again.

Ironically, mandating higher wages could do the most damage to those it intended to help. Historically, when one segment of the population makes more, the rest somehow make more also, leading to more inflation. While raising the minimum would help fast food and retail employees the most, these are the same people who suffer the most from inflation.

All jobs are not the same, and general cost of living in various locales is not the same and never will be. If an employer can't hire or retain employees due to wages, working conditions or benefits that is his problem to address, not governments. This is still the United States, and most employers are looking for someone who will show for work daily and at least act like he/she enjoy what they are doing. There is always more general or technical education available to assist in finding a better job if that would help.

Unfortunately there are always employees who do not earn their wages, no matter how high they are. There are also employers who put personal profit in front of employee benefits but

that is another problem.

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As usual, plenty 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 future 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 on TV. We acknowledge that our perspective on some items in this column may be contrary to some of our readers. 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."

Jim Frink - BCTA

"Let us not seek the Republican answer or the Democratic answer, but the right answer. Let us not seek the blame for the past. Let us accept our own responsibility for the future."

John F. Kennedy

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
P. O. Box 684
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Meeting Location

The Village Grille, Allouez

BCTA Meeting and Events Schedule – MARK YOUR CALENDARS.

Sept - Oct 2019

Thursday - Sept 19, 2019 BCTA Monthly Meeting.
12:00 at The Village Grille, Allouez
Speaker - David L. Lasee BC District Attorney

Thursday - Oct 17, 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.

