

The Way to Be an Informed Citizen

Glen R. Schwalbach

Recently, I alerted a town committee to a bill that was introduced at the state legislature. The bill would require local governments to allow a “second home” called an “accessory dwelling unit” on existing lot parcels as long as established setbacks were followed. Someone asked, “Is this just a proposal or a law?”. The response, when I said it was a proposed bill, was that they did not need such information until it became a law. Well, of course, that would be too late and leave the town having to deal with the unintended consequences. By the way, I alerted our BCTA members at a monthly meeting and then followed up with the legislator who authored the bill and who then introduced an amendment. The local concerns were also sent to the legislative committees involved. Perhaps from this input, the bill did fail. The point, of course, is that it is important to keep an eye on what happens in Madison.

Our legislators do need and welcome input from everyday citizens. But it appears to be a challenge to stay informed. Here’s some information on how to do that with minimal effort.

The best resource is at “legis.wisconsin.gov”. This website presented by our state legislature has a wealth of information. To start with, on the home page, you can click on “Who Are My Legislators”. Just add your address and click “Find” or use their map function offered

in the same spot. Then you can get the legislator’s biography, what committees he or she is on, what bills they authored, and their contact information. Remember legislators can’t help with legal advice, court issues, federal issues or local issues. But, besides their legislative duties, they are likely to help when you have issues with state agencies.

Back on the home page, you will also see portals to the Statutes and the Administration Codes. There are a lot of reference sources such as the “Citizen’s Guide to the Legislature”, how to report fraud and waste, and how a bill becomes a law. Also, there is information on how to submit comments on proposed legislation (bills) and how to testify at related hearings.

But the handiest way to get information on legislation that you are most interested in is through the Legislature’s Notification Service. This Service will alert you by email to activity on only the legislation that matters to you. By clicking on “Notification Service”, you can set up an account. Then you can specify what subjects you are interested in such as property taxes, education, waterways, UW System, solar, or ATV/UTV’s.

Maybe you are a teacher, an electrician, a nurse or other credentialed professional or just interested in these areas. You can designate those labels as subjects you want to follow. You can also use the administrative register to follow the actions of specific agencies that affect or interest you. Just click on the icon of a pencil and ruler near the top of the various pages after you set up an account and log-in.

You can also track specific proposals (bills) after they get an AB or SB number. This function will also send you alerts when the proposal is submitted to a committee and when a hearing is scheduled. As soon as a bill is assigned to a committee, you can submit written comments to the committee members or the committee’s clerk. The clerk is responsible to distribute your

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Meeting Change

**The Depot, Green Bay
12:00 noon**

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comments to each committee member.

Also, you might decide to testify at the hearing. It is easier than you think. Prepare your testimony in writing. There are guidelines on this same website. If the proposal is a hot topic, there will be a lot of people testifying. In this case, the chair of the committee might restrict the time for each oral testimony. I've seen as little as three minutes. Prepare your oral testimony with this in mind. But your accompanying written testimony, that you provide to the committee clerk at the time of the hearing, can be as long as you wish, remembering to still be concise and to the point.

Another suggestion, if you are in Madison stop by the Capitol and visit your senator and representative. You don't need an appointment. Just walk into their office. Your legislator may not be there but their staff persons will be. These people are very important to meet. If you just want them to let your legislator know that you visited or you have an issue to discuss, they are the ones who guide the legislator on positions and consequences of law-making.

One final note, another way to have government issues addressed is to be a member of the Brown County Taxpayers Association and to attend meetings when you can. We focus on taxpayer issues in Brown County but also follow state and national issues and provide input to our state and congressional legislators as appropriate. One example is the closure of the Green Bay Correctional Institution because of its age, condition, and overcrowding. We supported Allouez and Brown County on this issue in Madison.

If you have any questions or want more information, go to our website at "BCTaxpayers.com".

Glenn

April Meeting Notes

Chris Schaefer of the John Birch Society introduced himself and provided literature.

Today's speaker was Mark Scheffler, Democratic candidate for Congress in WI 8th District, speaking on his "Tiny Tax" proposal. Candidate Scheffler is a lifelong resident of central WI, growing up around the dairy industry. His first career was in music teaching, but moved to financial services where spent 28 years, ultimately running his own company. He is promoting the Tiny Tax which is a concept developed by economist Dr. Edgar Feige of the University of Wisconsin. Instead of taxing income, the Tiny Tax applies a minute (0.4%) tax on all financial transactions across the US economy. Based on the number of transactions taking place today, the tax would generate \$12 trillion in revenue compared to \$4.5 trillion today. The tax would be automatically collected by the entities processing the transactions. Candidate Scheffler claims the Tiny Tax would eliminate IRS filings for most people, simplify the tax code, lower taxes for the middle class, reduce cheating, eliminate bureaucracy and has the potential to stabilize Social Security and reduce federal deficits. If elected he would work to gain support for his plan and phase it in over a number of years alongside the current system.

Business items: President Heidel announced that beginning May 21st, our monthly meetings will move to The Depot, 200 Dousman, to allow us to return to a noon start time. This is in response to many members requesting we return to the earlier time. He also reminded members interested in submissions to the Tax Times to get them to Directors Sladek or Goldhahn. Members were encouraged to submit suggestions for meeting speakers to President Heidel. The next Executive Committee meeting will be July 8th. There has still been no response from our federal legislators concerning our resolution requiring withholding legislative pay during government shutdowns. Follow up is in process. Brian Verheyden is commencing work on renewing our website. Members are encouraged to offer suggestion on what they would like to see on the website.

Reports: Director Parins expressed concern about the amount of outside money being spent on local elections.

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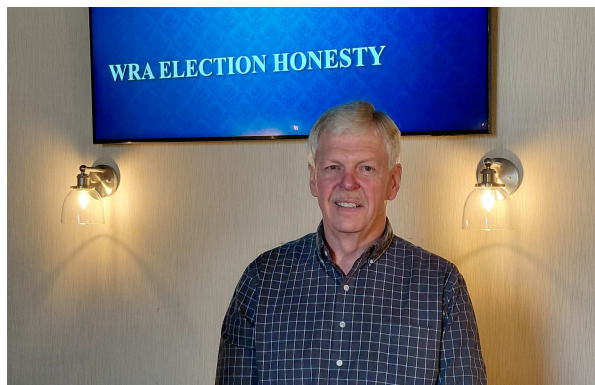
Director Sladek shared information about a group called American Promise which is working to have constitutional amendments in each state to allow states to restrict those outside contributions. Director Schwalbach shared that “Wisconsin Eye”, which televised legislative and court events has received funding from the legislature to continue operations. He also stated two PFAS bills were passed and signed by Governor Evers. President Heidel shared his intent to encourage area school boards to tie referendums to student achievement. A date is being finalized for a meeting between the Executive Committee and Green Bay School reps to discuss their fall referendum.

May Meeting Notes

Today’s speaker was Jeff Ings, speaking on the analytic research of Dr. Douglas Frank on election integrity. Mr. Ings is a regular contributor to the Appleton Concerned Taxpayers website, Appletonwi.org. Dr. Frank is a physicist with approximately 60 peer reviewed scientific publications. For the past 6 years he has focused his attention on election integrity data analysis and modeling across the 48 contiguous states. Mr. Ings reported that WI has 3.8M active voters out of 4.6M adult residents, but 8.2M names on the voter registration lists. He shared graphs from Dr. Frank showing that for the past 15 years, all 72 counties across WI show consistent changes in voter registration numbers in cyclical fashion. He theorizes that this is unexpected and is caused by central control of the voter rolls by the Wisconsin Elections Commission (WEC) instead of the county clerks where it should be controlled and this central control is problematic. He also shared concerns over electronic tabulation of votes and the proliferation of absentee ballots since Covid.

Business items: President Heidel reminded members he was open to suggestions on future speakers. He also reminded members to submit any opinion articles for the

Tax



Jeff Ings talks to BCTA in regards to Wisconsin Election Integrity

Times to Tom Sladek or Rod Goldhahn for review with the Executive Committee. The next Executive Committee meeting is scheduled for July 8th. Concerning our request of our federal representatives to vote for withholding legislative pay during shutdowns, we received responses from Congressman Weid and Senator Baldwin and were made aware that Senator Johnson voted in favor of Senator Kennedy’s bill to withhold pay. Director Verheyden reported on improvements he has made to our website. President Heidel and Director Verheyden were featured on former Mayor Jim Schmitt’s “Lean Local” podcast speaking on local tax issues.

Reports: Director Fletcher shared an update on federal primary elections across the country. The Executive and Schools committee will meet with the Green Bay School District in early June to discuss their proposed fall operational referendum. Concerns were expressed about the size of the West DePere operational referendum. Past President Schwalbach reported that the WI legislature rejected the recent special session bi-partisan funding bill.

During the regular session, there were 1238 Assembly bills, 1185 Senate bills, 247 new laws and 95 Governor vetoes .

Notes submitted by Rod Goldhahn, Secretary

Monthly Meetings @ The Depot

Monthly meetings are held at **The Depot**, corner of **Dousman and Donald Driver Way, Green Bay**. 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 **\$15 (includes tax and tip)**. Lunch is at 12:00 noon with monthly speakers presenting.

SUPPORT THE BCTA

New Members Welcome

www.BCTaxpayers.com

The Brown County Taxpayers Association is a local group working to bring information and awareness to issues that affect tax policy or impose regulatory burdens.

The TAX TIMES

Brown County Taxpayers Association
P. O. Box 684
Green Bay, WI 54305-0684

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Apr Meeting Notes

May Meeting Notes

Meeting Location
The Depot, Green Bay

12:00 pm Meeting

BCTA Meeting and Events Schedule – MARK YOUR CALENDARS.

Thursday - July 16, 2026 BCTA Monthly Meeting.
12:00pm at The Depot, Green Bay

Thursday - Aug 20, 2026 BCTA Monthly Meeting.
12:00pm at The Depot, Green Bay

BCTA monthly meetings are held the Third Thursday of each month, 12:00 pm, at , at The Depot, Green Bay.

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: \$15.00, Payable at meeting. Includes lunch, tax & tip.
Call Tom Sladek – 499-7701 for information or to leave message.

Jul - Aug 2026



New Location
New Time

Noon at The Depot

www.BCTAxpayers.com
