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# ◊ The TAX TIMES ◊

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Tax News and Views in Plain English

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## WHO'S MINDING THE STORE?

Most of the elected Wisconsin Representatives and Senators went home after putting together their budgets. Four Representatives from the Assembly and four from the Senate were to sit down and hammer out a final budget and take it back to their respective house. Now it seems that the eight went home too.

### WHO'S MINDING THE STORE?

Apparently the Democrats from the Senate want to determine spending before they settle on the money to be raised. The Republicans want to put in a tax cut and then from the money raised determine how much to spend. The negotiators(?) from both sides met and could only agree on one item. The Democrats couldn't change their position and the Republicans decided to take their ball and go home. Opps, the Republicans said they took the courageous route and walked out of the negotiations. Most people, like myself, say they are just taking their ball and going home. **WHO'S MINDING THE STORE?**

Prior to going home the Republicans and the Democrats did agree on one thing, the thing that our Association is strongly opposed to. Instead of cutting the \$750,000 in the Governors budget for funding campaigns to \$0, they agreed to raise the money pool to \$870,000. This issue passed unanimously at the State Republican Convention, there should be no taxpayer money to support campaigns. **WHO'S MINDING THE STORE?**

This isn't the first time the State must contend with no budget. It is easy for them to operate under last years budget. However, every city, village, town, school district, and county is waiting to see what is coming from the State so they can determine their budgets. If things go like the last budget session, the information will be known at the last minute and the rest of the local politicians will jump through a hoop to finalize local budgets. Maybe!!! With the two parties deadlocked like this, the State Budget may not be approved for months, and we will all get a tax break as the 4+% increase in spending will not take effect. In the meantime, **WHO'S MINDING THE STORE?**

Isn't it time for all our legislators to do the job we elected them to do. Get on with our work. Spend money where it needs to be spent and remember the taxpayer has had it with tax increases. We need legislators who represent the people and do the peoples work, not bull headed spenders who are unable to even talk to each other, or weak kneed politicians who refuse to do their basic job. Show us that you **ARE MINDING THE STORE!**

*Frank S. Bennett Jr.*  
President

**The BROWN COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION**

**How The Federal Government Spends Your Money.**

Congress is being urged to vote for the McCain Amendment to stop Wasteful Spending and Cap Extravagant Costs Related to the \$1.4 Billion Lease for the US Patent and Trademark Office.

The General Services Administration (GSA) is proposing new headquarters for these agencies. This lease would be the largest in GSA history - 2.1 million rentable square feet of space in eight buildings, which is one and a half times the amount of space in the Empire State Building. The cost is estimated at \$1.4 billion . By leasing the government would not even own the space.

The National Taxpayers Union , Citizens Against Government Waste , the Alliance for American Innovation (an alliance of small inventors who pay the PTO's fees) and other groups all publicly oppose the project.

Some of the extravagant spending highlights in this project include.

- Over \$9,000 in new furniture per employee including \$250 shower curtains, \$1,000 coat racks, \$100 trash cans, etc.
- Highest cost ever, by far, for lavish interior space finishing.
- \$29 million in "above standard" amenities, including mirrors and ballet bars for the *Fitness Center*, a customized judge's bench, and fancy lighting for a "museum."

The Ronald Reagan Building was also widely criticized as being enormously expensive and wasteful. Both projects call for about the same amount of federal office space. The difference, though, is dramatic. The government built and owns the Reagan Building. It cost \$738 million and was designed to last for 200 years. The government plans to lease the Patent Office complex for only 20 years, at an estimated cost of \$1.4 billion.

So far, no lease has been awarded, money been spent, or buildings being built. It was too late to scale back the Reagan Building after the waste was identified. Now is right time to stop the waste on the PTO project.

The \$250 Shower Curtain Con-

troversy Keeps Getting Worse. Last year, the Patent Office sent Congress a report itemizing project costs, including \$250 for shower curtains in the Fitness Center. After adverse publicity on network television, the Patent Office backed away, issuing a written promise stating it would "never" spend \$250 for a shower curtain. It said the \$250 amount was merely "a worst case scenario" estimate. Just two months later, though, the Patent Office tried to justify the cost with several laughable explanations offered in testimony before a Senate Committee, such as:

- a. Since the showers are in the Fitness Center, the cost includes a "heavy duty" shower rod because people need to chin themselves on curtain rods.
- b. The cost includes installation, meaning after building a brand new Fitness Center, part of the walls would be torn down to install rods that should have been there in the first place.
- c. The curtain cost more because it is mildew resistant.
- d. The cost includes inflation.

Now the Patent Office is telling Congress furniture costs will now be \$3 million more than before. PTO sent Congress an update to the report just last month. A Key Finding from the Government's Own Study is Confirmation that Congress authorized too much for this Project

Unfortunately, this type of irresponsibility with taxpayer dollars seems to be the rule rather than the exception in Washington.

**Open Letter To Congressman Jim Sensenbrenner From Michael Riley.**

*Dear Congressman Sensenbrenner,*

Recently I discovered a new federal tax on the telephone bill for the office of Taxpayers Network here in Cedarburg, Wisconsin. This tax is \$5.65 per month per line for "Federal Access Charge". Since this tax was placed in the "Monthly Service" section of the Ameritech bill, instead of the "Taxes" section, this tax is actually taxed an additional 8.6% because Federal + State + County + Baseball Millionaire taxes are applied. So Taxpayers Network Inc's office is being charged some \$18.40 total in taxes each month for two telephone lines.

I have this to say about that:

- 1- The Cedarburg School District already has adequate amounts of revenue from high property taxes and other sources, so this tax is not needed.
- 2- I am disappointed to see that Congress has given away it's taxing authority to the FCC without a whimper.
- 3- This tax should be repealed ASAP by Congress, if you guys have the stomach for it.
- 4- At the very minimum, this tax should be labeled "Additional Federal Telephone Tax" and placed in the "Taxes" section of the telephone bill, so misrepresentation and double taxation is avoided.

I thought taxation without representation was bad --- it seems that taxation with representation is just as bad!

Please advise your action on this matter. Sincerely, *Michael Riley*

**TOBACCO LAWSUIT NETS WISCONSIN LAWYERS \$75 MILLION. FIRMS EARNED \$3,032 PER HOUR.**

Excerpted & edited from The Washington Times July-14-1999 by Michael Riley of Taxpayers Network Inc.

Three law firms that represented Wisconsin in its lawsuit against the tobacco industry earned \$3,032 per hour for each of the 24,733 hours they worked. After the out-of-court settlement, these firms will receive \$75 Million over 5 years. Wisconsin won \$5.9 Billion over 25 years when this tobacco lawsuit was settled in November 1998.

It took a while for an open records lawsuit initiated by 3 Wisconsin newspapers to pry these records out!

The Wisconsin firms receiving these monstrous fees are: Whyte Hirschboeck Dudek of Milwaukee, Brennan, Steil, Basting & MacDougall of Janesville, and Habush, Habush, Davis & Rottier of Milwaukee.

**Editors Note:** As mentioned previously in the "TAX TIMES", the Wisconsin Attorney Generals office must have been fully aware of the tremendous profits to be made by these law firms when they were contracted

**PROPERTY TAX RELIEF  
--- A SHELL GAME.**

One of the most grievous provisions in the state budget deals with lottery and property tax relief. Currently the costs for lottery prize winnings, retailer compensation for the lottery, and lottery general program operations are all paid for by lottery revenues. In short, the lottery pays for itself first, before any property tax relief is given to property owners. At least this way, only those who play the lottery are actually paying for its existence. Those who morally or economically opposed to the lottery never pay for its cost.

To provide property tax relief, our legislature is proposing to change this. The Assembly's version of the budget will spend more than \$115 million to pay for lottery costs. Specifically, this version will spend roughly \$58 Million in the next two years for lottery retailer compensation, \$24 Million for vendor fees, and \$21 Million for general program operations.

Where will this money come from? From taxes such as the state income tax and the state sales tax. So, in other words, all taxpayers will pay the cost of the lottery instead of just those who choose to play it.

And the money that comes from lottery revenue to pay these costs will now be used for property tax relief. But, notice the shell game. Yes, there is property tax relief, but it will amount to only an additional \$60 per year for each property owner. There is no relief from taxes, because the property tax relief is really being funded by income and sales taxes. The Assembly version continues this ruse for the next two years. It is hard to believe that our legislature would attempt such a con game with the voters of this state.

The \$60 tax break is less than a 3% reduction in property taxes for an average homeowner. (The average property tax bill is \$2,126.) In addition, the non-partisan Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance has found that state and local taxes go up by \$1.60 for every \$1.00 in property tax relief voted by the legislature. And we should fund lottery operations for this ???

This state budget continues to expand government way beyond the rate

**BROWN COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION  
RESOLUTION  
Return the Surplus as Income Tax Reductions**

**Whereas, the Republican Assembly leadership proposes to refund the "new surplus" to Wisconsin taxpayers in the form of an increased state credit on property tax bills; and**

**Whereas, the state government of Wisconsin has overcharged income tax payers; and**

**Whereas, those citizens who were overcharged should be given their money back; and**

**Whereas, income tax payers should not subsidize property taxpayers; and**

**Whereas, property tax relief credits are viewed as spending when budgeted by state government, but are considered as income by local units of government; and**

**Whereas, historically, only 30 percent of all local property tax relief has been used as tax cuts; the rest has been used for increased spending; and**

**Whereas, the proposed additional property tax credits are likely to fuel increases in local spending, further identifying Wisconsin as a high state and local tax state; and**

**Whereas, manipulation of tax refunds confuses issues, hides the real costs of local government, and frequently taxes Peter to rebate to Paul;**

**Therefore, be it resolved that the Brown County Taxpayers Association demands that any budget surplus resulting from excess collections of Wisconsin income taxes be returned directly to Wisconsin income tax payers, and urges our Brown County legislators to vigorously support returning excess income tax collections to income tax payers.**

"To educate a man in mind, and not in morals, is to educate a menace to society."  
... Theodore Roosevelt

"Please accept my resignation, I don't care to belong to any club that will have me as a member."  
... Groucho Marx

"The short memories of American voters is what keeps our politicians in office." ... Will Rogers

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

**WHAT DO YOU EXPECT OF THE BCTA ?**

It seems that many of our elected officials, possibly in an effort to retain their level of prestige and comfort, try very hard in an effort to please all of their constituents. They promise to be the friend of the taxpayers at election time, but soon find themselves in favor of particular spending proposals which don't always represent the majority or the budget. Everyone has something they want.

Difficult or unpopular decisions can cost him or her their jobs, and "business as usual" is the result.

The key is "your elected officials". They are no different than the board of directors of a large corporation elected by the shareholders. They are responsible for hiring the proper administrators and other key personal responsible for running the company. Poor or otherwise unsatisfactory results are their responsibility to correct. The executives of the company are their employees and the bottom line on the balance sheet is their ultimate responsibility.

The BCTA is no different than any group of taxpayers (shareholders) concerned about the welfare of their investment (tax dollars.)

We meet to discuss the actions of our elected officials as effects our tax dollar expenditures and their value in relation to what we have been led to expect. The same as you or I trying to budget our income.

We realize there are many demands for our tax dollars from local, county, state and national levels. All seemingly trying to do everything for everyone as long as you and I pay the bill. People say taxes are too high, but offer few suggestions as to how they can be cut (especially without hurting their own pet projects.

Our group considers existing and proposed expenditures with regards to their need, value, and cost to the taxpayer. As a volunteer organization, we obviously have limitations on what we can accomplish. We try to keep our focus on "promoting fiscal responsibility in government", which is probably another way of saying let's provide good, basic services for our tax dollars, at a price we can all afford to live with. Expenditures which benefit only special interests or are not cost effective should receive close scrutiny before they are budgeted.

We further realize that as an organization we take stands that may not be in agreement with all of our members, even though we try to represent the majority of our membership on key issues. How many elected officials are right 100% of the time? Our monthly meetings are open to anyone interested in attending, and the "TAX TIMES" is available for expressing your thoughts and opinions.



As mentioned previously, we are a volunteer organization, and do not have a paid staff to investigate, publicize, lobby or anything else associated with forming public opinion or policy. From time to time we have had members criticize us for not taking certain stands more to their individual liking. In many cases, however, they could have worked through the organization themselves rather than expect someone else to carry the ball for them. Many of our members have supported the BCTA since it was organized 14 years ago. Even though participation on committees and our directors are voluntary, we can not produce results without the support of our members. If you expect more results, speak up and let it be known.

Recently we sent reminder notices to members who had overlooked their renewals. We have kept our dues at the same level since we organized and unlike many other institutions, have no plans for any increases. Our most effective influence is the number of members we have, and we make every effort to justify your investment. New members are always welcome, and more active

**Officials May Be Confused about Social Security, But Not The Public. A CLOSER LOOK AT RECENT POLL NUMBERS.**

**By Michael Riley**

A recent report from the Cato Institute indicates that if our elected officials seem confused about how to reform Social Security, the public certainly is not. In survey after survey, year after year, the vast majority of Americans have said they want to reform Social Security by allowing workers to save their payroll taxes in individual retirement accounts.

When it comes to Social Security reform, a little public awareness could take politicians a long way. A 1999 poll conducted jointly by the National Public Radio, Kaiser Family Foundation, and Harvard's Kennedy School of Government found 65 percent of Americans say workers should be allowed to invest some of their Social Security payroll taxes in personal retirement accounts.

A poll conducted by Mark A. Siegel & Associates and Frank Luntz for OppenheimerFunds found that 76 percent supported giving workers a choice about where to invest their Social Security taxes.

A poll conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates for Americans Discuss Social Security found that 58 percent favor changing Social Security from a system where the government collects all the taxes that workers and their employers contribute to a system where individuals invest some of their own payroll contributions.

In 1998 the AFL-CIO polled its members and found 60 percent favor putting a portion of their Social Security taxes into individual accounts.

An Associated Press Poll, conducted by International Communications, found that 74 percent of Americans favor letting workers shift some of their Social Security tax payments into personal retirement accounts that they would invest on their own.

The Democratic Leadership Council Survey found that 72 percent of democrats and 76 percent of all Americans support making it easier for workers to invest a portion of

Let us not seek the Republican answer or the Democratic answer, but the right answer." . . . John F. Kennedy  
"When in doubt — do what's right."

## Trails: When is Enough Enough?

Most government initiatives begin as good and wholesome projects in response to the perceived needs of some segment of those governed. But invariably, somewhere along the way, these initiatives take on a life of their own, and slip into the dreaded category of “governmental excess”. For the past twenty years, every candidate for public office, at whatever level of the institutionalized hierarchy, has vowed to put a stop to Big Government. The net result has been a steady and continuous growth of infrastructure, which in large part, administers and manages governmental excess. Big Government has gotten bigger, and the ramifications for the ordinary taxpayer are negative and extreme. We now have armies of people working on initiatives we thought were satisfied. And we have new monies being pledged to those same initiatives we thought were satisfied. When is enough enough?

The Wisconsin DNR is a stunning example of good initiatives gone amok. Over the past ten (10) years, they have spent \$250 Million of the state Stewardship Fund largely for the acquisition of recreational properties. The Stewardship Fund is bonded money, so the taxpayer gets to pay the principal and interest, as well as maintenance/management fees. In 1999, they are asking for another \$10 Million, mostly for acquisition. The DNR currently owns approximately 4% of the state landmass, practically all for recreational purposes. What is the goal of the DNR? Would they like to own 10%, 15%, or 20% of the landmass? When is enough enough?

In Wisconsin, 24% of the landmass is owned by the government: federal, state, and local. This means that 24% of high-priced property is tax exempt. This is potential tax revenue lost, and pushes the burden of upkeep to the ordinary taxpayer. Government land is not on the tax-rolls, but the DNR, and other agencies, keep acquiring with gusto. Is this “governmental excess”, or just good and wholesome recreational development? What is the goal of government? Would they like to own 30%, 40%, or 50% of the landmass? When is enough enough?

When it comes to recreational trails, Wisconsin leads the way for the entire nation. At present, Wisconsin has 1300 miles of trails in existence. According to the DNR, they would like to triple that number, and have plans to do so, in the next ten (10) years, or as soon as acquisitionally possible. This would give Wisconsin the distinction of having almost 4000 miles of recreational trails for hikers and bikers to enjoy. Everyone says that trails are a positive initiative that adds greatly to an area's quality of life. But getting back to the basic premise, when does a good concept evolve into “governmental excess”? Do hikers and bikers need 4000 miles of trail? And when does the liability for being over-trailed, move beyond the realm of the acceptable for the ordinary taxpayer? In other words, when is enough enough?

In Brown County there are currently four (4) recrea-

tional trails in existence; one, the Fox River Trail, currently in the planning stage, but hotly contested; and three (3) additional trails on the drawing board for 1999/2000. If all goes according to plan, this will give the Brown County taxpayers the privilege of having funded eight (8) trails that will be used, at one time or another, by 1% or 2% of the Brown County population. And it seems inevitable that future budgets will identify sites for new and inviting trail placements. Four trails seem like a lot for a county of only 300,000 people. Eight trails seem extravagant (maybe even excessive). When is enough enough?

The proposed Fox River Trail makes an interesting case for governmental excess. As recently as nine months ago, this project was estimated to cost less than \$1 Million, in its entirety. The DNR was stating that it would pay approximately \$400,000. for acquisition and road-repair costs; and Brown County was estimating development costs to be another \$500,000. to actually put the trail in. It sounded like a boon for the taxpayers, a new 15-mile trail for less than \$1 Million. But, as with other projects, this one soon took on a life of its own. The shrewd DNR negotiators agreed to pay \$435,000. for acquisition, and took on the responsibility (and liability) for all road repairs, and bridge removals. The removal of one particularly large and cumbersome swing bridge in Green Bay will probably cost the state (and its taxpayers) close to \$1 Million. At the same time, Brown County unilaterally decided to make this trail bigger and better than any in existence. The original development plans called for a rustic tract similar to the Mountain Bay Trail. The new plans call for seven (7) miles of the trail to be 12-foot wide asphalt surface, thus doubling the cost of development. In less than a year, the cost of the proposed Fox River Trail has more than doubled from original estimates. And with the project meter still running, no one knows where the true cost will end up. When is enough enough?

It is apparent that government will drift to spending excess, as long as the taxpayers allow them to do so. It is time to say we care about how our tax dollars are being spent. Excess is not progress; excess is waste. We must tell our elected officials when we see good initiatives go amok. We, the taxpayers, must be the ones who define and determine the meaning of “enough”!

*Terry Watermolen*  
Fox River Neighborhood Association

A public debt is a kind of anchor in the storm, but if the anchor be too heavy for the vessel, she will be sunk by that very weight which was intended for her preservation.” . . . Colton

“Like mothers, taxes are often misunderstood, but seldom forgotten.” . . . Lord Bramwell

**THINGS THAT MAKE US WONDER.**

We appreciate the concern of the UW system students over the increase in tuition rates. It would be nice to allow rates to be "frozen" as they seem to think is possible. It would also be nice for taxpayers if the tremendous cost of maintaining the UW system to the state could also be frozen. Welcome to the real world.

When you need an addition to your home, a new house or other major expenditures, you first consult your pocketbook and determine whether it will fit your budget for the projected future. However, it seems that if a school district or for that matter any unit of government wants more space the procedure is to simply create a want list, have an architect draft some plans, have a spin team justify the need whatever the cost, and do whatever is necessary to proceed. Don't worry, the taxpayers will pay the bill.

Repercussions and memories of the tragic accident at the new Milwaukee baseball park will remain long after construction is finally completed. As mentioned in the last "TAX TIMES" this project is already about \$150 million over the original estimate—costs already being paid by taxpayers who probably have little to gain from this extravaganza.

As tragic and unfortunate as this accident was, it will probably add more cost and delay to the project.

A recent article in "Sports Illustrated" related that Yankee Stadium in New York was constructed in only 284 working days. This was in 1922, and certainly the technology of that time was primitive compared to methods available today. Apparently it was privately financed which possibly reduced the opportunities for every one and their brother to get a share of public money — which seems to be the case today with tax dollars. Doubtless there were accidents and other problems but the job got done and the 70,000 seat stadium is still in use. The same article rates Lambeau Field as the best pro football stadium in the country so would assume they for

one are happy with it the way it is.

There has been mention of proposed legislation in Congress to protect the Great Lakes and other water resources from diversion to other parts of the country having water problems. Probably has some merit and will become more of an issue in the future as resources become more strained. Just hope that Texas or Oklahoma don't restrict exporting their petroleum products or Florida doesn't allow northern tourists to reciprocate.

Campaign financing is a subject that will likely be left alone until after the year 2000 elections are history. Then the winners will have a lot of political debts to pay so not much will be done either. Political promotion is probably very profitable for the advertising business as they can charge top dollar for their services and by law are paid in advance.

What bothers me is seeing respected business organizations making or otherwise arranging "contributions" to people in public office in an effort to influence proposed legislation that could be to their benefit, but not necessarily of benefit to everyone else. We realize that does not necessarily reflect an endorsement of the candidate, his party, or his voting record on other issues. It is just a matter of business.

We have heard enough stories in recent years of questionable fund raising activities, and realize it takes a lot of money to get elected. The media is quick to point out that the candidate with the most money usually wins and lists of contributors are supposedly public records.

We also hear about how people are completely turned off by politics and wonder if knowledge of the fact that money talks doesn't have something to do about it. The BCTA has gone on record opposing public funding for political campaigns, but there has to be a better system. Agree?

It will be interesting to see how our legislature and congress play

out the debate over their claimed surpluses. Quite frankly, I am not making any big plans for spending my refund. The fact that we have a big election year coming, and the amount of the surplus, if any is an uncertainty certainly adds to the confusion. It does not seem proper that this should be an excuse for foolish spending projects, or initiating programs that may be difficult to pay for in the future, (like adding more benefits to Medicare or Social Security).

We all certainly want to have Social Security made more secure, but question whether anyone in Washington is sincere about doing anything meaningful about it. Whatever happened to the national debt the presidential candidates were so concerned about the last several elections?

What concerns me, however, is if indeed there are surpluses, it is a result of over-taxation, from you, me, and everyone else contributing to the system. It would be nice to simply reduce the rates across the board for all taxpayers, but there are a lot of special interests positioning themselves for handouts. Giving additional credits to selected interests from my money and calling it a refund or

Draw your own conclusions:  
**\$724,260** Total amount George W. Bush, Al Gore and Bill Bradley have raised from computer industry sources through June 30, 1999.  
**\$7,655,158** Total amount the same three candidates have raised from lawyers and law firms

"A lobbyist is a person that is supposed to help a politician make up his mind, not only help him but pay him."  
 . . . **Will Rogers**

"It's terribly hard to spend a billion dollars and get your money's worth."  
 . . . **Hubert Humphrey**

"Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it everywhere, diagnosing it incorrectly, and applying the wrong remedies."  
 . . . **Groucho Marx**

**JULY MEETING NOTES.**

Monthly BCTA meeting held Thursday, July 15, 1999 at the DAYS INN. Terry Watermolen, representing the Fox River Neighborhood Association, presented their perspective of litigation pertaining to the proposed Green Bay to Greenleaf recreational trail. He explained that there are several regulatory and legal issues of considerable substance, which have the potential to preclude development of the trail as proposed. These include rulings by the Surface Transportation Board, land titles that return the property to the owners upon abandonment of the railroad, the actual applicability of the Rails to Trails Act to this property, and several issues of "takings." In addition, the Department of Natural Resources has avoided including the cost of removing a railroad bridge adjacent to this property in the estimated trail development costs.

Mr. Watermolen explained that the railroad is selling its rights to the trail property for \$435,000. The railroad has already salvaged the steel rails but it is leaving the railroad bridge near Porlier Street for the government to remove. Railroad bridge removal estimates range from \$500,00 to \$1,000,000, potentially doubling the cost of the trail development.

The railroad owned only 12 percent of the Green Bay to Greenleaf right of way; 88 percent of the right of way was provided by easements. Many of the property owners' land titles recognize the railroad easements and contain explicit language stating that the property shall be returned to the owners when the railroad is abandoned.

Mr. Watermolen feels very strongly that Brown County taxpayers will be placed at substantial risk by continuing to spend tax dollars to develop the Green Bay to Greenleaf recreational trail before the pertinent regulatory and legal decisions have been issued.

A report was given from the committee which had reviewed the by-laws of the Brown County Taxpayers Association. A number of minor adjustments were proposed, primarily to update sections of the by-laws which had become obsolete, and to streamline the ap-

pointment of new directors and committees when necessary. Approval of changes as made by the directors, and the revised by-laws will be made available on the BCTA website when finalized.

Don Kristopeit, president of the Federation of Wisconsin Taxpayer Organizations (FWTO), reviewed recent FWTO activities. He noted that Assembly Bill 105, which would have restricted the dates for school construction referenda to regular Spring and Fall election dates, has lost its momentum. An attempt is being made to include it in the budget bill. FWTO is vigorously opposing any increase of tax dollars for election campaigns as proposed in the state budget. He is dismayed by the proposed doubling of funding in the state budget for the DNR's Stewardship program. The state plans to BOND for \$40 million per year to allow the DNR to provide matching funds for local governments' purchases of land for recreational activities. There are serious concerns about the DNR's loose spending and sloppy reviews at the present \$20 million per year level. Why should the DNR be rewarded with twice as much spending money?

The next BCTA meeting is scheduled for August 19, and we will try to obtain a member of a legislature to

**BCTA Board Approves By-Law Changes.**

A number of minor changes to the by-laws of the Brown County Taxpayers Association were approved at the July 15, meeting.

Some of these included allowing members from other than Brown County, membership renewals on a fiscal rather than calendar basis, more flexibility in the number of directors, more discretion for the president to appoint committees and replacement directors and requirements for a quorum.

These changes were made to make the organization more flexible and to make official various adjustments which had been made through the years. The complete by-laws are available for inspection from the secretary, or our website, [WWW.BCTAxPAYERS.ORG](http://WWW.BCTAxPAYERS.ORG).

**County Jail Admissions Slow in 1998.**

Admissions to Wisconsin's county jails increased 1.8% in 1998. The smallest year-to-year increase in this decade. Still, 240,845 prisoners spent an average of 17.3 days each in one of Wisconsin's 72 county jails, and overcrowding is an issue. Over half of the state's 72 counties (including Brown) are in some stage of jail expansion or expansion.

**Wisconsin Taxpay-**

**LIFETIME PERKS FOR DEFEATED SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS**

When Milwaukee voters ousted incumbent school board members in the April, 1999 election, they also stopped paying the defeated officials their \$7200 annual salaries. But voters couldn't prevent two defeated board members and their spouses from receiving lifetime benefits and coverage under the Milwaukee Public Schools health insurance plan.

After eight and ten years respectively on the board, outgoing members Sandra Small and Leon Todd will pay just 5% of the cost of their MPS health insurance premiums. Taxpayers will pick up the rest, and estimated

"Death, taxes, and childbirth. There is never a convenient time for any of them." . . . **Margaret Mitchell**

"The nearest approach to immortality on earth is a government bureau." . . . **James F. Byrnes**

"To define democracy in one word, we must use the word "Cooperation." . . . **Dwight D. Eisenhower**

**NEXT BCTA MEETING AUG. 19.**

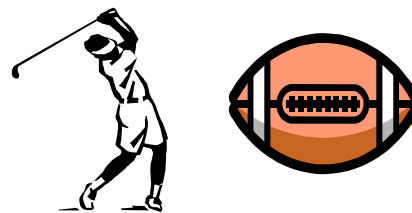
The BCTA has sent a letter to Rep. John Gard regarding our concerns with the cost to taxpayers of developing the Fox River trail. We also have invited him, (depending on the legislative schedule and other commitments) to attend our Aug. 19, meeting to discuss this matter and the state budget in general.

**BCTA Meeting and Events Schedule**

- Thursday - August 19, 1999 - DAYS INN - Downtown  
12:00 Noon - BCTA Monthly Meeting. Open discussion on state budget proceedings and the state surplus. Area legislators invited to attend depending on their schedules.
  
- Thursday - September 16, 1999 - DAYS INN - Downtown  
12:00 Noon - BCTA Monthly Meeting. Program to be announced.
  
- Thursday - October 21, 1999 - BCTA Annual Meeting.  
Time, Place and Program to be announced.

*All members of the BCTA, their guests and other interested persons are cordially invited to attend and participate in these open meetings. Phone 499-0768 or 336-6410 for information or to leave message.*

*Regular monthly meetings are held the third Thursday of each month at the DAYS INN - Downtown. Price, \$6.50 per person - includes lunch ! Payable at Door.*



**AUGUST, 1999**

**SUPPORT THE BCTA  
New Members are always  
welcome.**

Call 336-6410 or 499-0768  
Write us at P. O. Box 684,  
or visit our Website [WWW.  
BCTAxPAYERS.ORG](http://WWW.BCTAxPAYERS.ORG)

“In other words, a democratic government is the only one in which those who vote for a tax can escape the obligation to pay it.”

. . . Alexis De Tocqueville

“A straw vote only shows which way the hot air blows.”

**The TAX TIMES**

**Brown County Taxpayers Association  
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