
◆ The TAX TIMES ◆

Volume 16, Issue 6

Newsletter of the Brown County Taxpayers Association

May, 2001

CALIFORNIA AND ENERGY

The state of California is in the middle of an energy crisis. The citizens are suffering rotating blackouts and business is unable to predict when they will or will not have electrical power. How the people of California handle this crisis will have an impact on the rest of the country.

How did California get into such a situation? No electric producing utilities have been built in California for the past decade while demand for electric power is growing annually. Rules restricting emissions from utilities have kept power companies from expanding their operations. The predictable result of not enough power for all situations is the result.

With the demand for gas during the recent winter, gas prices went up over 50%. At these prices the electric utilities operated at a loss. If this were of short-term duration the utilities would be able to absorb these losses. Increasing the cost of electricity to cover the increase cost of the raw material would also solve the problem, however; neither of these options are realistic. The increase in natural gas prices and the lack of a quick way to raise electricity prices resulted in major losses by the two major utilities.

The state of California opted to purchase electric power of the open market and sell it to the utilities at a lower price. This will allow the utility companies to operate at a profit and distribute the power within the state. The original money to make the power purchase is \$10 billion, that right with a B for BILLION. This is a marked departure of what the federal government did for Chrysler when they were in a financial bind. The federal government guaranteed loans to Chrysler. In the California power situation, the state of California went into the power business. What does this mean for taxpayers?

The taxpayers of California will now subsidize the utilities anytime the cost of producing power exceed the cost of selling power. The solution does nothing for the long-term problem and puts the taxpayers at extreme risk. Where will the money come from? The State doesn't have a budget line for power purchases nor does it have surplus funds to pay for such a large dollar bail out. The Governor is suggesting the State use ten-year bonds to pay for the power business. Now the cost is \$10 BILLION plus interest. The taxpayers of the State will pay for these bonds and the utilities will have been subsidized. The payment won't start until after the next election for governor. I believe this is wrong.

The State should stay out of the power business. Policy within the State needs to be supportive of both the business and public needs. Options need to exist which allow for adjustment of prices due to increased raw material cost (The airlines use a ticket surcharge when fuel prices climb sharply). What are your thoughts on this subject? Write us at P.O. Box 684, Green Bay, WI 54308-0684 or e-mail us at taxpayer@netnet.net.

Frank S Bennett Jr.,
President

The BROWN COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION
Promoting Fiscal Responsibility in Government

Election Day Thoughts.

The April 3, 2001 spring election is now history, and judging by the relatively poor turnout of voters, there are a lot of people in the community who never know it happened. Even the headlines in the morning "Press-Gazette" were more concerned with the early release from prison of one of the previously convicted "Monfils" group than the election or for that matter the potentially dangerous situation then developing with China.

Nonetheless, the 20% or so who actually voted made some decisions for the rest of us that could have a noticeable effect on public policy and our pocketbooks in the months and years to come.

Local Elections.

First, there were a number of village and town leaders chosen, which in most cases returned incumbents to office indicating they were doing a satisfactory job for their constituents. In some communities a change in leadership apparently was in order. Local government represents democracy at the base level and the bottom line is often the local property tax rate. Most officials are personally acquainted with the people who elect them to office and are aware of their concerns. Every decision they make is carefully scrutinized and unpopular mandates are remembered come election day. It is up to each of us to know what it is going on in our communities.

The NWTC Referendum.

However, some of the other April 3, results will effect all of us. The NWTC referendum authorizing some \$46 million for new construction passed rather easily. There is no question the NWTC is a tremendous asset to north-eastern Wisconsin and makes a significant influence on our economy both by training people for meaningful employment and providing skilled workers for a wide variety of employers. The majority of us have likely benefited from their services sometimes during our careers. Like many other tax supported institutions, however, the cost of maintaining these services appears to be growing faster than the ability of taxpayers to

keep up. We respect the integrity of the NWTC directors and appreciate that they put a lot of consideration into the plan they proposed. Nonetheless, it bothers us that whenever a capital project is put forth, there is usually little opportunity for public debate as to the timing, or possible alternatives which could be less costly. We are given a take it or leave it proposal, and the media generally accepts it and endorses it with little question. We are now seeing this with the proposed mental health facility for Brown County. We are not questioning the need for this facility, or that it must meet certain standards. We do question the enormous cost and lack of serious consideration given to cost saving alternatives. The same for the new jail ready to go on line

Property tax rates are probably the biggest expense concern of most homeowners and certainly a consideration for business's contemplating physical expansion or locating to our area. The reason property taxes have grown so dramatically in recent years is probably not so much a few big items as it is a combination of little things. A few dollars more per thousand added to your tax bill for a school or jail plus the general cost of government services rising faster than the rate of inflation keeps adding up. New debt has to be financed and new schools and jails have to be staffed. Somewhere there has to be a limit where the cost of all of the services we expect and demand are prioritized and placed in perspective with ability to pay and overall need by the general public. Apparently that point has not yet been reached.

Supt. of Public Instruction.

The statewide election for the Supt. of Public Instruction could also have dramatic results effect on the property and statewide taxes we are compelled to pay. While changes to the present tax levy limit law would have to be approved by the legislature, it is no secret that the newly elected Supt. and the people who supported her would like to have these limits which protect property taxpayers thrown out of the books entirely. This

seems to be what her campaign was all about. The teachers unions publicity machine has been working full time to accomplish this. They seem to be using the NFL as their role model for establishing teachers pay standards. Nobody argues that smaller class sizes, qualified and well paid teachers, and up-to-date buildings would not be nice for our children. However, smaller classes means more expensive buildings and instructors, and there is an awful lot of debate out there as to whether the results for the children would be that much better. In our recent BCTA membership survey, fewer than 20% of respondents thought more money should be spent on public education, while 80% thought spending should be less or maintained at the present level. We would believe that when the quality of education is debated, more consideration should be given to the overall cost and impact on taxpayers. A blank check to unlimited taxpayer dollars is not necessarily the answer.

Other Referendums.

There were several area referendums seeking additional funds for school budgets or new construction, and many of them were approved by the voters. Some by wide margins. It has been our observation that when local school districts are perceived to be well managed, and do their homework when asking for additional money, the voters will go along. These same voters can also indicate to the school districts when enough is enough.

Campaign Finance Reform.

Also appearing on the ballot in Brown County was a loosely worded question asking if we thought "campaign finance reform" was in order. Even though no specifics on how to accomplish this were given, it is obvious that the present system is being grossly abused and the vast majority of us likely believe changes are necessary. Yes, it at least sounds like a good idea. The question is how to do anything meaningful. The way the referendum was worded, it is like asking theoretical questions like should schools should be improved, or if we should save the environment, but without factoring in the cost or side effects of the bureaucracy necessary to accomplish such programs.

This same referendum question has appeared already on ballots in most other Wisconsin counties. Although it is only advisory, it appears to be supported by groups who seem to believe that more public money should be used to finance certain political campaigns. Do we really want this? At present, only about 10% of us voluntarily contribute \$2.00 from our income tax returns for the presidential election. National, state and local budgets are already strapped to the limit and many worthwhile projects go begging for funding already. The recent statewide election for Supt. of Public Instruction will probably go down in history as one of the most negative we have seen and certainly did not add dignity to the prestige of the office. I certainly would not want to see my tax dollars paying for such negative advertising, but question what kind of reform would put all candidates on a level playing field. The term campaign finance reform should go beyond where the money comes from to the conduct of the campaign and the influence contributors have on office holders after the elections.

The availability of television commercials, skilled propagandists using the media, and a public who believes what they are told rather than making their own decisions have made running for major political office a new game. Raising and spending several times what an office pays the victor certainly is not the intention of our system, but you can be sure that no one in office will approve any changes unless they feel secure for the next election.

The problem seems more to be what our elected officials do to pay off their backing and contributions once they get in office. More often than not it is very obvious that party line votes are based on financial support to their party rather than the interests of the people they represent.

There will undoubtedly be a lot of debate on this subject during the next few months, and we will try to represent the views of our membership.

Conclusion.

Another observation on the last election was the disappointment that more people do not choose to seek pub-

lic office. There are plenty of those around with opinions and suggestions for improvement, but will not take the step to leadership. For example, we feel it unfortunate there was not more interest in the race for the Green Bay school board. This is the largest government unit in Brown County and recall that in previous years large numbers of candidates sought election. This is probably this is a reflection on our changing times. The cost and energy required for campaigning, public scrutiny, time and effort required to hold office, and abuse from the media are all factors that discourage potential candidates.

Unfortunately, some the same factors discouraging people running for office are probably keeping people away from the polls. We have no delusions that the results from the April 3, election would have been any different with a 100% turnout, but at least the majority would have been making their endorsement of the tax increases and policy changes which will result.

Whether or not some campaign reform plan will help some time in the future remains to be seen.

Jim Frink - BCTA

The Gas Tax Increase.

Transportation chairman Jeff Stone states that over 30% of Wisconsin roads need rehabilitation, which justifies the recent gas tax increase. In December of 2000, the Joint Committee on Finance unanimously voted to earmark \$9.1million out of the \$41.6 million of federal transportation aid for the Lambeau renovation project to be applied to infrastructure expenses. There was nothing stated in the Lambeau bill regarding this gift to the Packers. However, apparently our legislators feel that it is more important to give the Packers more welfare and increase the gas tax to help rehabilitate Wisconsin roads.

The average family probably drives over 15,000 miles per year. And at 20 miles per gallon, purchase 750 gallons of gas. At .9 of a cent per gallon, the tax increase would only be \$6.75 per year, but the question is where it goes. The Packers or the state highway system in need of repair?

Jim Smith

"A recent study shows that taxes have moved ahead of death in the "sure-thing" department."

. . . **Cartoon Caption**

"This is the season of the year when we discover we owe most of our success to Uncle Sam."

. . . **The Wall Street Journal**

Mark your Calendars.

**Thursday, May 17, 2001 - BCTA Meeting
12:00 Noon, Glory Years, 347 S. Washington St.**

Guest Speaker

**Former Wisconsin Legislator, Elected State Treasurer,
and Secretary of the Dept. of Revenue**

Cate S. Zeuske

"The relationship between State and Local Taxes."

Cate has many years of experience with state government and brings tremendous expertise in the areas of tax and fiscal policy. She is presently employed by Taxpayers Network, Inc., an organization with over 50,000 members in 43 states as a tax policy consultant.

All BCTA members, Guests, and other interested parties are invited to attend.

Price \$6.50 per person. (Includes lunch) Payable at meeting.

Note: Reservations appreciated so that we may provide for adequate seating.
Call 336-6410 & leave message. Thank you.

Eliminating the Social Security Benefits Tax.

In 1983 Congress passed legislation that taxed up to 50% of Social Security benefits, based upon thresholds, which made the tax a form of "means testing" since beneficiaries in lower income brackets were not subject to the tax. The purpose of the tax was to return money to the Social Security trust fund to help keep the system solvent. The interesting point is that while taxes that were being collected on Social Security benefits and returned to the Social Security Trust Fund, the Trust Fund was being raided so that the government could continue its profligate spending on other projects. The government issued IOU's to cover amounts removed from the Trust Fund, which only added more to the debt. Had the government not taxed Social Security benefits, those funds could have flowed through the economy.

In the early 1990's a few multimillionaires and politicians began to blame the retired people receiving Social Security benefits for the debt that our country had accrued. Political chicanery placed some of these men on the Commission of Entitlement and Tax Reform, which began to spur reform that would make retired people the scapegoat to pay the piper. One of these multimillionaires was president of an organization that argued against raising taxes on big business and for cutting Social Security and Medicare benefits for middle class Americans. By recommending the use of "means testing" to determine retirement benefits, they would have turned Social Security into a welfare system.

In 1993 Congress increased the amount of Social Security benefits subject to tax from 50% to 85%, which became effective in 1994. However, last year the House passed legislation that would have repealed the 1993 increase, but Congress came to a close before the Senate could act on the legislation).

The following refers to the current federal taxation of Social Security benefits for a married person filing a joint tax return: Your adjusted gross income plus half of your Social Security Benefit constitutes what is called your

(modified adjusted gross income). When your modified adjusted gross income reaches \$32,000, 50% of your Social Security benefits are taxed. When your modified gross income reaches \$44,000, you are taxed on 85% of your Social Security benefits. If your modified gross income is less than \$32,000, Social Security benefits are not taxed. (For a single person, the thresholds are \$25,000 and \$34,000) Fifty percent of Social Security benefits are subject to Wisconsin income tax when Modified AGI reaches \$32,000 and beyond for those who file joint returns.

The "means testing" concept applied to the taxation of Social Security benefits is not only discriminatory, but it hides the fact that older Americans whose Social Security benefits are subject to taxation, pay higher than normal marginal tax rates. The taxation of Social Security benefits is really a tax on other retirement income, because they are not taxed until other income reaches a certain point combined with 50% of Social Security benefits. For example, when a person reaches a modified AGI of \$44,000, each dollar after that coming from other income, for a married person filing a joint tax return, raises taxable income by \$1.85. If this person is in the 28% tax bracket, his income tax increases by 52 cents per added dollar, which effectively means that this person is in a 52% tax bracket for each additional dollar earned. Let's look at a typical case example to see what happens to one's Social Security benefits after taxes and medical insurance premiums are paid. The example in the next column assumes the person has a modified AGI of over \$44,000 and files a joint return.

With the tax surplus that we now have, there is no excuse to discriminate against the elderly. Those of us who have worked hard and saved for retirement want to be able to stay independent, pay our escalating health insurance premiums, live with dignity and take care of ourselves as long as we can.

The tax on Social Security benefits needs to be repealed. Past taxes paid on Social Security benefits went to the Social Security Trust Fund. Instead of strengthening the Trust Fund,

which was the purpose of the tax, the Trust Fund was raided to create more

Social Security Benefits, Man and Wife Combined	\$18,500
Minus Medicare Premium	- 1,092
Minus Federal Tax on 85% of Benefits @ 28%	- 4,403
Minus Wis. State Tax @ 6.55% on 50% of benefits	- 606
Minus cost of supplemental health insurance	- 5,050
TOTAL COSTS	11,151
NET BENEFIT After	7,349

debt rather than the tax money remaining in the hands of consumers who help the economy. The tax is discriminatory, because the thresholds subject it to means testing. It reduces the incentive for people to save for retirement and it requires the elderly to pay higher than normal marginal tax rates, while energy and medical costs are escalating.

It is expected that a complete repeal of the tax on Social Security benefits will be addressed in the context of comprehensive Social Security reform during the 107th Congress. For those of you who feel that the tax on Social Security benefits should be repealed, it is imperative that you now begin writing to your representatives.

Jim Smith--BCTA

In addition to your own representatives, the following could be contacted:

- Senator Jon Kyl,
Chairman, Social Security & Family Policy
 - Senator Max Baucus,
Joint Committee on Taxation
 - Senator Don Nickles,
Committee on Taxation and IRS Oversight
 - Senator Chuck Grassley,
Joint Committee on Taxation
- Address for all: United States Senate, Washington D. C. 20510**

"There are two distinct classes of men . . . those who pay taxes and those who receive and live upon taxes. . . . **Thomas Paine**
"Taxes are not levied for the benefit of the taxed." . . . **Robert Heinlein**

April Meeting Notes. BCTA Wins 2001 Liberty Award; Senator Welch Explains State Budget.

Monthly meeting of the Brown County Taxpayers Association, Thursday, April 19, 2001, at the Glory Years.

Bob Collison, Chairman of the Libertarian Party of Wisconsin presented their party's annual Liberty Award for 2001 to the Brown County Taxpayers Association in recognition of its efforts opposing the referendum to enact a 0.5 percent sales tax in Brown County for the Lambeau Field renovation project. Mr. Collison noted that opposing this tax was a defense of individual liberty. It was accepted by BCTA vice-president Richard Parins who noted that there were a number of organized groups opposed to the Lambeau Field sales tax referendum, and that the award was accepted on behalf of all of these groups and individuals who made an effort to defeat the referendum.

BCTA Vice-President Richard Parins accepts Liberty Award from Libertarian Party Chairman Bob Collison.

State Senator Robert Welch reported on the status of the state budget. He began by noting he is a sponsor of a bill to reform the state budget process. His bill would split the state budget into 10 separate budgets for different functions. This approach would involve more legislative committees, providing closer scrutiny of individual spending items and preventing the whole budget to be held hostage for one or two items. It would also reduce the number of non-fiscal policy issues

packed into the state budget. Now, the only way to get a policy issue past Senator Chvala is to place it in the budget.

Senator Welch explained that with the booming state economy for the last several years, it has been easy to look at the new revenue and decide to spend half of the increase and use the other half for tax cuts. Now, with \$700 million less revenue anticipated, some hard choices loom ahead. The 2/3ds funding for schools commitment will demand another \$560 million.

Prison costs will require \$200 million more. Meanwhile, state government operations have been receiving annual cuts of 5 percent. The State's generosity can't continue.

Jim Smith explained the Tax Calculator on the **BCTAxpayers.org** web site. This handy tool, which can be easily downloaded, enables a person to keep track of gasoline taxes and sales taxes (including the Packer Stadium tax) paid over a period of time.

Mike Riley of Taxpayers Network, Inc. presented an article from the **Bloomberg Financial Report** comparing the wealth friendliness of states. Wisconsin ranked 47th overall and 50th nationally for retired people, which helps explain why senior citizens often move to tax friendlier states in the South. Wisconsin received a grade of D. **An upper income retired family staying in Wisconsin would pay about \$10,640 in taxes, but only \$4,702 if living in Florida or \$4,314 in Nevada. Wisconsin needs to stop beating up on capital.**

Mike also distributed copies of the Citizens against Government Waste **2001 Pig Book**, which lists dozens and dozens of pork barrel atrocities in the federal budget. TNIs website is www.TaxpayersNetwork.org

The next BCTA meeting is scheduled for May 17, 2001, 12:00 noon at the "Glory Years", and will feature Cate Zeuske, former Wisconsin State Treasurer and head of the Dept. of Revenue as speaker. Details on the back page of this "TAX TIMES."

Dave Nelson - Secretary

State Senator Robert Welch addresses BCTA members at April 17, meeting.

Tax Freedom Day and The State Budget.

Enough has been said about Wisconsin's high taxes and the fact that we have to work 6 more days than the average American to pay them each year, but apparently Madison hasn't got the word yet.

With a predicted shortfall of \$500 million in the next budget, new and unfunded spending proposals keep appearing. An example are proposals to offer seniors relief on their prescription drug expenses. As nice and necessary this may be, it could still be as expensive to administer as the benefits, and present opportunities for the wrong people to take advantage. Do other states have such a plan? Shouldn't this be looked at through the framework of medicare? Stay tuned.

Articles and opinions 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 TIMES". Please send them to the BCTA, P. O. Box 684, Green Bay, WI 54305-0684, or call Jim Frink, editor at 336-6410. E-Mail - Frink@ExecPc.Com.

www/BCTAxpayers.ORG

Things That Make Us Wonder.

Don't really know how much Miller Brewing is paying to name their new ballpark, but it will still be a lot less than the taxpayers. Same with whatever happens to Lambeau Field naming rights. How about Lambeau/Taxpayers Field?

Wisconsin Public Service reported about 15,000 customers past due on their winter heating bills. Would assume many of these are families struggling to maintain the dream of home ownership. The same people who are most affected by ever increasing property taxes, and the ones who are overlooked when public spending is increased.

Campaign finance reform certainly sounds like a good idea that is long overdue. If someone could only come up with a plan that would, #1 - Prevent donors from buying political influence with their contributions, #2 - Keep all candidates for office on a level playing field, #3 - Doesn't dip into the taxpayers pocket to pay for campaigns, and finally, #4 - Still provides major revenue for the advertising agencies and media who presently profit, their might be something possible. Don't count on it anytime soon however.

The proposed mental health center is proceeding on the fast track, and it is always a mystery how they always know the cost of these things before the plans are drawn up. We even read that the amount requested was on the high side to be safe, which may or may not be good public policy, as it was not approved by a referendum. This project should be put in perspective with its need, actual benefits to the community, and other spending priorities. More specifically, is spending \$195,000 of taxpayers money plus interest for each resident in order? Have all alternatives been carefully considered or are they being disregarded as an excuse to spend more money? What will be the next big project that will be charged to the taxpayers?

Funny how people would never

get away with cutting in front of you while standing in line for a checkout have no problem squeezing their SUV's in your face and space while traveling along at highway speed. Probably not a taxpayer issue except road rage certainly must be a factor in keeping police protection costs up.

Anything Brown County can do to cut expenses would be a step in the right direction, but the proposal to truck our junk all the way to Oshkosh just to save \$75,000 or so per year sounds like it could use a little more study. Especially when the savings are based on the premise of obtaining state prison labor for the project at \$1.60 per hour. Let's hope they factored in the cost of a few high priced guards. Wasn't our recycling center supposed to be a big money maker?

Mayor Jadin has made reviving the downtown area one of his top priorities, and we agree that this is important to Green Bay as a city. However, is dumping millions of taxpayer dollars into purchasing white elephants, tax incentives which detract from worthwhile investment in other parts of the city, or giving priority to large public works spending the answer? It still seems logical to first get people going downtown and the private money will follow. Maybe we are wrong, but it hardly appears that the parking meters and ramps are paying their way, but are intimidating a lot of people from patronizing the area and will do so whatever happens. We agree that the price for parking is reasonable, but many of us have experienced annoying experiences patronizing the downtown. The city has spent millions of taxpayer dollars on the Broadway area, but you don't seem many people patronizing the meters. Is it possible that the parking utility is secretly running the city.?

Tax reduction is a nice idea but it must be matched by spending reductions if it is to be effective. One thing that bothers me is that it will probably have the effect of removing a lot of low income people from being

income tax payers entirely, effectively putting more burden on those with higher incomes. Who will pay when taxes have to be raised?

Insofar as interest payments on ~~the Lambeau Field bonds will come~~ from taxpayer dollars via the Brown County sales tax, the less to be paid the better. However, calling it a "good deal" for taxpayers seems misleading as all of the principal and interest being paid on the bonds is coming from taxpayers in the form of a tax we wouldn't have in the first place if other avenues of financing had been pursued. It is highly unlikely that the sales tax will sunset when the bonds are finally paid so what good deal will Joe Taxpayer be receiving? Is there a difference to the average person if their tax dollars go to a stadium, county purposes or whatever. The way taxes have been increasing recently, there is no way of predicting what the situation will be 15 years or so from now.

While there is probably some merit to the proposal of splitting the duties of the DNR into two separate departments, it is difficult to believe the part that the final cost to taxpayers would be the same as it is now. Agree?

It is probably a common and acceptable fiscal practice, but I was surprised at the announcement that the next big project for the Green Bay School District, a \$10million makeover for the Aldo Leopold School could be partially paid for with \$3million or so in interest received by the district on the \$55 million in bonds sold for remodeling projects in 1999. Would you borrow money from a bank so you could reinvest it in a CD or passbook savings account? Since the taxpayers pay the interest to the purchasers of the bonds, and we assume this would be at a higher rate than interest received, this really doesn't sound like a good deal or the best use of taxpayer money.

Just wondering - JF

Ten Things You Can Do To Advance The Principals You Believe In.

#1 - Understand your principals. America was founded on a set of clear and mutually consistent political principals. Set some time aside for rereading the Declaration of Independence, The Constitution, and other works that trace the development of these principals throughout our history,

#2 - Understand the proper role of government. U. S. Citizens have long understood that government is necessary to preserve civil order, and provide certain necessary services. However, there are baneful effects when government outgrows its proper boundaries. Develop a healthy skepticism about proposals increasing the size, cost and powers of government.

#3 - Be informed. Keep abreast of public happenings and read critically the views on all sides of public issues. Constantly expand your knowledge of our history, politics, and economics and of the men and women who are involved.

#4 - Make an effort to influence opinion on a public issue that interests you. Join a group working for a worth- while public policy goal. Write letters to the editor and look for opportunities to be heard.

#5 - Work for political candidates of character and ability who reflect your values. Competent campaign workers are a candidate's most precious resource.

#6 - Hold office holders accountable. Pay attention to what elected officials do as well as what they say. Call, write or visit them and press them to take clear stands on issues of importance to you. If they let you down, start planning to replace them with others who will do better.

#7 - Stand up for those who stand up for you. Men and women of character in public life are often subjected to some- times savage personal attack by their political opponents. Don't let those who you respect take these blows alone. Come to their defense in the media and debate. Insist on civility in discourse and fair, open, and truthful debate on real issues.

#8 - Run for office. Town government is the basis building block of democracy. Look for an elected or appointed town office in which you can serve the public and expand your own skills, experience, relationships and public recognition.

#9 - Volunteer in an endeavor to improve your town or state. Assist the less fortunate, commemorate historical events, honor war veterans, expand opportunities for young people, instill moral and religious values, or preserve a clean environment. Do your part for a worthy organization of your choice.

#10 - Teach your children what you believe and what you have learned. Share with them our legacy as Americans, and set for them an example so that they too will become valuable citizens of our republic.

Hold On To Your Wallets. By Frank G. Lasee

Something unusual happened in Madison a few days ago. Something unusual enough to attract attention. Del Ellefson, a Wisconsin resident from Washington County, brought his truck to Madison to drive around the Capitol. He drove around the Capitol all morning long. He has a sign on the top of his truck which reads "Wisconsin – a Taxpayer's Hell."

Del got some media attention for coming to Madison, and more than a few motorists honked at him (the sign asks them to – he's not a lousy driver). We all hope that more people will take action like he did, to bring more attention to the fact that, despite all our rhetoric about cutting taxes, Wisconsin is still one of the most highly taxed states in the nation.

Next year, according to the Governor's budget, the state will spend \$23 billion. That's over \$4500 for every man, woman, and child in Wisconsin, and that's just the state spending. Local taxes aren't included in this figure.

The Governor's budget also contains spending increases of about 3% a year. This should be enough of an increase, but it's not going to be. The urge to spend more money is rampant among Madison politicians. That's because all politicians want and need to be popular with the voters – voters don't support candidates who refuse to support their pet issues, and the easiest way to support an issue is to spend money on it. Whether a program works or not, by spending money we can say that we care, and that brings in the votes.

Now we have the news that revenues are down, and the budget is \$500 million short. Don't think for a minute that we can't raise taxes – we can, and we can do so in such a way that even attentive taxpayers won't notice. We can do it – the question is: will we?

My answer to those who would raise taxes – just don't do it. The state budget is tight this year, just like many household budgets. When the household budget is short, you find ways to spend a little less.

We're going to be \$500 million short in a \$46.6 billion budget. That's a little over 1 percent. What is the answer to this 1% shortfall? Some will want to raise taxes. I propose we subtract 1% from all budget items if need be. Each department can find 1 percent fat in their budget. All it takes is the political will. If there is great pressure to live within our means and not raise any taxes, we will. Otherwise, hold onto your wallets. **Rep. Frank G. Lasee**

BCTA Meeting and Events Schedule.

Thursday - May 17, 2001. BCTA Monthly Meeting. Glory Years.
 Washington St., Inn, 347 S. Washington St., Green Bay.
 12:00 Noon. Special Program.

**Former Wisconsin State Treasurer and
 Dept. of Revenue Secretary Cate Zeuske**
“The relationship between state and local taxes.”

Cate has many years of first hand experience on state fiscal policy, and will offer her insight as to what can done to relieve state budget problems.

All members of the BCTA, their guests, and other interested parties are cordially invited to attend and participate in our open meetings.

Phone 336-6410 (Jim Frink) or 499-0768 (Frank Bennett)
 for information or to leave message.

Reservations for meetings are appreciated.

Thursday - June 21, 2001. BCTA Monthly Meeting. Glory Years
 Washington St., Inn, 347 S. Washington St., Green Bay.
 12:00 Noon. Program to be announced.

Thursday - July 19, 2001. BCTA Monthly Meeting. Glory Years
 Washington St., Inn, 347 S. Washington St., Green Bay.
 12:00 Noon. Program to be announced.

Meetings the third Thursday of each month.
Price \$6.50*, Includes Lunch. (* Payable at meeting.)

May						
2001						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

“Unless we wish to hamper the people in their right to earn a living, we must have tax reform.”
 . . . Calvin Coolidge

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

The TAX TIMES

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- Cate Zeuske To Address May BCTA Meeting.**
- The Gas Tax Increase.**
- Eliminating The Social Security Tax.**
- Ten Things You Can Do To Advance**
The Principals You Believe In.
- BCTA Receives Liberty Award.**
- Hold On To Your Wallets.**

And More.