
◆ The TAX TIMES ◆

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SOME GREEN BAY SCHOOL ISSUES

We as citizens of Wisconsin pay some of the highest taxes in the country. Being part of Brown County also adds to our tax burden. However, most of our tax dollars go toward the education of our children. Let me outline two items that are making me concerned.

First is the use of interest on bonded money being used to complete a project that wasn't part of the referendum. The Board of Education bonded \$55 million in referendum bonds and is paying 5.1% interest on the money. As good stewards of these funds, the District is lending out any money that isn't currently needed and is receiving 7.19% on those funds. This arbitrage will generate about \$3.8 million. Rather than use the interest money for the bonded purpose, the district used \$3.1 million to renovate Aldo Leopold School. That is taking advantage of the taxpayer and making renovations that were not voted on. Shame on the Green Bay School Board. We as taxpayers deserve better treatment.

Second is an item that gets me concerned. Last month I received a phone call asking if Southwest High School was building a day care center for their teachers. I said that I hadn't heard anything about it but would look into it. After a few calls, I found myself talking to Mike Ptacek, the Director of Curriculum for School to Work in the Green Bay School District office. He informed me that Southwest High School was looking to improve the curriculum in child-rearing skills. After additional discussions, Mike stated he would send me the RFP (request for purchase). Please note this document inside this issue of the "Tax Times". When noting the age group of the children (2½ to 6), the schedule for the early learning center (195 school calendar year) and the need to identify slots for Green Bay School District employees, it is easy to conclude that indeed, Southwest High School was building a day care center for its own employees. After touring the facility and finding the size to be 1894 square feet, it is estimated that the early learning center cost taxpayers about \$185,000.

By now I was very concerned about what was happening with my tax dollar. Additional information in the RFP told me tax dollars were going to support the maintenance of the facility both inside and out, heating, lighting, and phone service. Daily maintenance, repair and upkeep of the premises' and insurance on the facility would also be at taxpayer expense. Yes, you read that correctly, our tax dollars are even paying for phone service for this early learning center. My level of concern is now peaking.

I read in the *Press Gazette* on July 23, 2001, the School Board would be voting on the contract between the District and the day care provider that evening. I went the meeting to share my concerns. The Board was very friendly and listened intently as I shared my information and distributed copies of the RFP. I found out the following morning the day care center had been tabled. I was pleased the School Board would look at options and consider the taxpayer.

The need to provide child-rearing skills is a good program for our public schools and partnering with a facility that does this on a regular basis will allow for anyone to use the service. It also solves the problem of what to do with the children when school is not in session. Reserving slots for School District employees is bad policy.

Frank S. Bennett Jr. **President**

The BROWN COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION
Promoting Fiscal Responsibility in Government

Reducing State Spending Up To Governor.

By Rep. Frank G. Lasee

The budget we sent to Governor McCallum this year has been hailed as one that raises no general taxes, includes the lowest spending increase in years, and provides education to our children and medicine to our elderly. I voted against it, because unless the Governor uses his veto power in lavish fashion, this budget is going to send taxes and spending up, up, and up.

In this budget, the state is putting more money into K-12 education, and will fully fund SAGE, to bring all classrooms, kindergarten through 3rd grade, to a 15 to 1 student/teacher ratio. There are doubts about the program's effectiveness (what would you rather have – a great teacher in a larger class, or a lousy teacher in a smaller class?), but we're going to spend millions funding it statewide. SAGE and 4-year-old kindergarten are going to require more teachers, meaning more pay and benefits, and more space to hold classes, meaning more building referendums. Property taxes are going up.

The prescription drug program is priced at \$78 million next year. Programs like that one always cost more than the original estimates. If we make prescription drugs cheaper for people to buy, people will buy more prescription drugs – the state will pick up the cost. Supporters have already said they intend to see it expand in the future.

This budget includes structural deficits adding up to more than \$2 billion over the next three years. That means we've included spending measures without knowing where the money's coming from. We could raise income taxes to cover it, but the Legislature would have to take the blame for it. More likely – we'll find a way to shove it onto the backs of local governments.

That means more property taxes (and various other, less noticeable, taxes).

The spending caps were left in the budget, but gutted – the Higher Education Aids Board, the Department of Public Instruction, and the UW System have all been excluded from the caps – their spending won't count.

The spending cap bill was already flawed, simply by virtue of its being a bill. We need a constitutional amendment – the legislature can ignore a bill. But at least it was something we could hang our hats on. It was a start. We could build on it. Instead, opponents of spending restraint are already tearing it down.

This budget adds up to \$47 billion in spending. That's nearly \$9000 for every man, woman and child in the state, and it's \$10 billion more than the budget we passed just four years ago. In a budget that big, following such rapid growth in spending, we were completely unable to find ways to cut spending and taxes.

While other states are cutting taxes, and sending their citizens rebates, Wisconsin remains the third most highly taxed state in the nation, and we seem intent on going higher.

There's still one thing we can hope for, and that's for the Governor to use his veto – the most powerful veto in the country. Governor Scott McCallum has the power to put the caps back together, to eliminate the tax increases, and to hold the spending in line. He can do it. The question is, will he?

Perhaps, if enough of us ask him to. Write him, call him, send him an email. Let Governor McCallum know we want a budget that spends less and taxes less. Wisconsinites need the relief.

Rep. Frank G. Lasee, 2d Assembly Dist.

To contact Governor McCallum,
E-mail: wisgov@gov.state.wi.us

National Debt Clock Keeps Ticking.

In the June *TAX TIMES*, we reported that the National Debt stood at **\$5,667,644,649,445**. As of 9:00 PM, July 31, 2001 it has increased to a total of **\$5,736,997,949,703**, or an increase of almost 96 1/2 Billion dollars, or over a billion dollars per day.

This amounts to \$91,367 for every American family. (in addition to any other debt you may have.)

Congressional Website Easy to Use.

If you want to check the status of any Federal Legislation, Text of Bills, Bill Summaries, Roll calls, Congressional Committees, etc., check out www.Thomas.loc.gov/. This website is sponsored by the Library of Congress, is extremely easy to use, is very complete and timely. Give it a try if you are not already using it to check the status of federal legislation.

"Buying Lottery Tickets is not retirement planning." . . . **Max Alexander**

"Never answer a question from a farmer." . . . **Hubert Humphrey**

"The Constitution requires that Congress treat similarly situated persons similarly, not that it engage in gestures of superficial equality." . . . **William H. Rehnquist**

"Don't interfere with anything in the constitution. That must be maintained, for it is the only safeguard of our liberties." . . . **Abraham Lincoln**

Should Social Security be privatized?

In the past Social Security has served us well in providing assurance against poverty for working Americans, but it's apparent that it needs some changes if it is going to continue to provide the same benefits for years to come. The question is whether the present system, which provides retirement, disability, and survivor benefits can be improved and continued as a pay as you go system or if a privatized system of some sort would be better. It's hard to imagine a privatized system that could provide this range of benefits. If a private system covers only retirement benefits, will the government collect additional taxes to provide disability and survivor benefits or will individuals need to purchase their own coverage?

The major problem with the present system is that the ratio of workers to retirees is shifting toward an increasing number of retirees supported by the taxes of fewer workers. Another problem is that the government has weakened the system by raiding the trust fund in exchange for worthless IOU's. At the present time the only fix suggested for the problem seems to be either increased taxes or reduced benefits and neither of these ideas appears palatable. One of the arguments against the present system is that the return on one's investment is low, but we must keep in mind that it provides retirement, disability, and survivor benefits. Present law requires that trust funds be invested in U.S. Treasury securities earning the rate of U.S. government bonds held by the public. By changing the law the government could invest a percentage of the trust funds in conservative securities that may have a higher yield than government bonds. I would think that this would preclude the government from raiding this fund and possibly make the present system more viable. The strategy of one large public fund earning the same average return as millions of private funds should result in lower investment fees and result in a higher return than millions of private accounts, each with a separate investment expense.

Shifting to a privatized system, even on a partial basis, would have huge problems. There would be tremendous administration expenses and diverting payroll taxes from the present system to private accounts would weaken the trust fund, which has current and future obligations amounting to trillions of dollars. Currently, 45 million Americans receive benefits of which 28 million are retired, 5 million are dependent spouses and children, 7 million are survivors of deceased workers, and 5 million are disabled workers. Statistics put out by the Leadership Council on Aging Organizations states that without Social Security benefits, 15 million Americans would be in poverty, including 1.5 million children. How are these obligations to be paid if taxes are diverted to private accounts? Social Security is an insurance system, not just a retirement safety net.

I can't imagine a plethora of millions of small private accounts, each having investment and management fees, each carrying an investment risk, and with millions of individuals making their own investments with little knowledge or investment experience in the market. A private system would require that funds go into retirement accounts, but how is the government going to administrate this system to be sure that the funds

go into retirement accounts? For those with private accounts who plan to retire and find the market at rock bottom at that time, may find that they can't afford to retire and may not be in good enough health to continue working. The present Social Security system provides a retirement annuity that continues throughout the lifetime of the worker that provides at least a bread and butter basis. How long will accumulations under a privatized system sustain workers?

Our present system redistributes benefits in favor of low-income workers. Since private accounts would not provide for redistribution, many low-income workers who were employed for a lifetime will end up impoverished. This will require more taxes to help minimize impoverishment. How would this problem be handled? The original purpose of Social Security was to provide a safety net to prevent impoverishment during retirement, disability, and survivorship situations, which private accounts would not accomplish. Private accounts might favor the middle and high-income workers while many low-income workers would deal with old age and poverty.

Due to redistribution of benefits under the present system, low-income workers receive a better return on their investment than high-income workers do, which provides the safety net for the less fortunate. I don't believe that government should assume the role of providing a full-blown retirement system. Workers need to take more advantage of Roth IRA's and maximize 401-K plans if they have one. Also, the government needs to immediately increase the allowable contributions to IRA's. This is the real way to privatize.

America will have to decide if it wants our government to set up a retirement system based upon private accounts with funds set aside from their taxes, or if they want the present system fixed to continue retirement, disability, and survivorship benefits using a redistribution system to provide protection from impoverishment. Once that decision is made, we have to find a way to make it work.

President Bush has appointed a stacked commission made up of 14 pro-privatization members with a mandate to come up with a plan that must include private accounts.

Both a private account system and the present Social Security system are complex and have problems to solve. It behooves President Bush's commission to carefully study the advantages and disadvantages of both systems before making a recommendation. To crash an established system that has done a fairly good job in the past, without an intense search for solutions would be folly.

The BCTA believes this is an important issue that will effect the federal budget, the taxes we pay as individuals and available personal income for both workers and retirees for years to come and should be followed closely. Note the comments from Art Kelley and Mike Riley which appear on the following page. What are your thoughts or suggestions?

Jim Smith - BCTA

Other views on Social Security Reform

After sending a copy of the article, "Should Social Security be Privatized", to Art Kelly, who is the Coordinator of Field Operations for the United Seniors Association and to Mike Riley, Founder and President of Taxpayers Network, Inc., I received replies regarding their views.

Art Kelly believes that Social Security should be strengthened and reformed by:

- (1) Passage of the Lock Box Bill, HR2, to abolish the so-called "unified budget," in which Social Security surpluses are combined with other federal revenues and considered to be disposable income of the federal government.
- (2) Passage of the Social Security Preservation Act, HR 96 and HR 219, to put real assets in the Trust Fund, rather than meaningless IOUs from the government to itself.
- (3) Passage of the Social Security Guarantee Act HR 832, to provide a legal guarantee for Social Security benefits for those retired and those nearing retirement;
- (4) Creation of Personal Retirement Accounts for a younger workers that would be owned by each person and which the government could not divert into non-Social Security spending. Social Security reform is not just desirable. It is absolutely necessary.

Mike Riley states that we need to restructure Social Security into a dual system, with credibility:

- (1) We need to guarantee the benefit checks for a retirees or soon-to-be retirees.
- (2) We need to establish Personal Retirement Accounts for workers, with the worker having sole ownership of the accounts and the hard assets in it.
- (3) We need to stop cooking the books and properly log in assets and liabilities.
- (4) Liabilities should be amortized via a "mortgage" and reduced to zero over time (15 to 20 years).

What are your suggestions? **Jim Smith**

Ashwaubenon Village President to Address August BCTA Meeting.

Ashwaubenon Village President Ted Pamperin will address the August BCTA meeting scheduled for 12:00 noon, Thursday, August 16, at the "Glory Years."

In addition to his duties as village president, Ted is a member of the Stadium District Board which oversees the Lambeau Field renovation project, and serves on the committee of area communities studying the problem of the future water supply for Metropolitan area.

Details on the back cover of this "TAX TIMES."

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www.BCTAxpayers.Org

JUNE MEETING MINUTES. DIRECTORS IRRITATED BY STATE BUDGET SHENANIGANS.

Monthly BCTA meeting held June 21, 2001 at the "Glory Years." Open discussion on various issues of current taxpayer concern.

The directors discussed the state budget, focusing on the \$500 million one-time fixes the Joint Finance Committee uses to balance its proposed budget. Using \$450 million of tobacco company settlement money is the largest of the one-time budget gimmicks. Continuing support of two-thirds funding of local education is being questioned. Each percentage point of local education support costs \$150 million per biennium. Adjusting local education support to 60 percent would save a billion dollars.

There are no improvements the State Senate's version of the budget, which increases spending and taxation while ignoring the upcoming budget shortfall of over \$700 million. The Senate's budget bill increases taxes on businesses by \$98 million over the biennium. It raises cigarette taxes by 22 cents per pack. Taxes on ATM machines would increase by \$12 million, which would actually be a tax increase for ATM users. The State Senate appears to be seeking nomination for "taxpayer enemy #1."

The proposal for a \$13 million Tax Increment Financing (TIF) investment to support a new hotel development in downtown Green Bay was discussed. Several directors questioned the economics of proposed TIF district, observing that it appears to be a major subsidy for the development.

Brown County budget issues were addressed, specifically contributions to certain organizations. Although the organizations receiving contributions are worthwhile, the practice of making charitable contributions with tax dollars is simply bogus. It appears county government wants to seize the taxpayers money, give it to favored organizations and then slap itself on the back in congratulations of what a "charitable" entity it is. It was noted that before "home rule" was established several years ago, county board committees established the budgets for county departments, which seemed to create more awareness and scrutiny of the department budgets than the present system provides.

Directors were incredulous at news of the establishment of a day care center at Southwest High School in Green Bay. Use of the center for educating students in child care seems to be the cover story, but the stipulation of preference for District employees for available spaces in this tax-subsidized center reveals the true agenda and had the Directors hooting in derision.

- Dave Nelson and Tom Sladek

"I wish that party battles could be fought with less personal passion and more passion for the common good. I am not interested in fighting persons, but in fighting things."
... Woodrow Wilson

"The politician's promises of yesterday are the taxes of today."
... W. L. Mackenzie King

The Kyoto Treaty Revisited.

Recently there has been a lot of publicity, mostly critical, regarding the position of the U. S. Government in opposing the so called "Kyoto Treaty."

While, this issue has been kept in the background the past couple of years, the rest of the world seems to favor it and is pushing for implementation.

We are concerned that if enforced, the provisions of this treaty would effect everything from our overall economy, our lifestyle, the taxes we pay, and foremost our national security.

In any event, much more education to the American public is in order, and a lot of consideration to the possible consequences of this treaty are in order. Following are articles reprinted from previous "TAX TIMES" covering our views of the subject.

The following article appeared in the June, 1998 "TAX TIMES".

"Federation of Wisconsin Taxpayer Organizations Concerned With Global Climate Treaty.

The Federation of Wisconsin Taxpayers Organizations, Inc., (FWTO), of which the Brown County Taxpayers Association is a member, has been invited and agreed to join a broad-based coalition of national business, labor, environmental and academic groups who are concerned about the inequities and severe negative impact that the Global Climate Treaty, (Kyoto Protocol), will have on every state in the union. According to a study conducted by Wharton Econometrics Forecasting Assoc. (WEFA), Wisconsin alone will suffer the loss of \$475 million in revenues by the year 2010. The so called Kyoto Protocol developed last December at an environmental summit in Japan is **WRONG** on the science - **WRONG** in its approach, and will lower American standard of living while accelerating taxes in an unbelieving upward spiral. Wisconsin taxpayers will be hit twice; once by higher fuel and energy costs and again by higher taxes.

President Clinton attended the conference and signed the treaty on be-

half of the U. S. It still has to be ratified. Senate resolution 98, which passed 95-0 made two very specific stipulations about the treaty: it should apply to all nations, and not harm the American economy. 129 of 173 nations, including China, India and Mexico, are exempt from provisions of the treaty, while the U. S. would be required to cut energy use by 30%. Accordingly, energy prices would rise sharply, and the economy could suffer immense damage. For a treaty that will produce little or no environmental benefit.

- ◆ **Will the Kyoto treaty reduce the overall level of Greenhouse gases?** At best minimally. Man-made greenhouse gases, which many blame for climate change, account for only 4% of total greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.
- ◆ **How will the treaty be enforced?** No one knows as yet. It will possibly be unenforceable.
- ◆ **Will developing countries eventually participate?** So far, countries such as China, India and Brazil which represent 40% of the worlds population have refused to take part. Most of the presently industrialized nations have already committed to reducing greenhouse gases on their own, so there is little incentive for developing nations to join, or invest in environmental control technology.
- ◆ **How accurate are the Clinton Administration estimates on the potential costs of the treaty?** The administration has pegged its cost estimates for the Kyoto treaty to predicted savings from deregulation of the electric utility industry. White House economic advisers argue that the savings from the deregulation will offset higher power and gasoline costs and economic dislocation resulting from implementation of the treaty.

We realize this is a very complex issue, as we are all concerned with saving the environment and conserving our natural resources. However, the consequences could be devastating, and it will be important to let our representatives know your thoughts. **Material from the FWTO.' The following is reprinted from the July, 1998 "TAX TIMES."**

"Hidden Costs of Kyoto Treaty Turn Up.

In the June "TAX TIMES" we reported on the Federation of Wisconsin Taxpayers Organizations concern with the possible cost of the Kyoto Global Climate Treaty on Wisconsin taxpayers. As time goes on, the cost keeps rising.

In March, a member of the President's Council of Economic Advisors, claimed the agreement would cost the average American family no more than \$110 annually.

However, WEFA, Inc., a responsible economic forecasting firm has estimated the cost for an average American family at \$2,700 per year. A difference of \$2,590.

During debate last year over particle and ozone standards, the EPA estimated a cost estimate of \$8.5 billion, but finally admitted the true cost was \$46 billion - after the regulations took effect.

Although the president has proposed a so-called "free-market" solution to reducing greenhouse gases, some analysts say his proposed international "cap and trade" program is no more than a stealth tax that would permanently limit U. S. economic growth, and present a major technological revolution in the energy sector. This cap could cost America trillions of dollars in the next century, and the implications of this treaty could be as disastrous as global warming. **National Center for Policy Analysis, From TNI"**

Editors Note: *Although it is obvious that some things have changed since 1998, and we assume that certain modifications would be made to the treaty, it appears the media could be making a grave mistake by blindly endorsing this treaty without fully examining what it is all about, and the potential consequences contained therein.*
JF

"There are two distinct classes of men. . . those who pay taxes and those who receive and live upon taxes." . . . Thomas Paine

"Lottery: A tax on people who are

The Press is Right on This One.

Editor, *TAX TIMES*. I would like to compliment the *Press-Gazette*, on their July 7th editorial regarding the party *caucuses* system. This 1960's created legislation is a **WASTE** of our taxpayer money. Can you imagine, 3.9 Million a year to lobby for the Democrats, and Republicans, of OUR money. As an Independent voter, I am ashamed of such **GROSS** misuse of our tax Dollars.

All I have read about is that our Legislators couldn't agree to agree on the ground rules for the BUDGET compromise. Well here is 3.9 Million they could have saved right off the top. This is such an outrage it has caused me to write to my representatives, and I encourage each and every one of you to do likewise. Remember the squeaky wheel principal; if enough of us complain, they will listen.

Be sure to advise your representative to vote in favor of the bills introduced by, Rep. Marty Reynolds, D - Ladysmith, and Sen. Shelia Harsdorf, R - River falls, as the bills work their way through the system. At least there are still a few representatives that are not afraid to stand up against the corrupted political system. I also want to congratulate Rep. John Ryba for his stance on this issue, and support to eliminate these caucuses.

Can you imagine, almost a million dollars *per caucus, per party* (Republican and Democrat), of **OUR** money that is used for Conventions, (caucus), and or PARTY, now that's king size **WASTE**. Let your representative know you are tired of it, and we are going to change things in Madison if they don't respond to this simple **CLEAN-UP**. Thank you.

Jack Schneider

"It's a game. We (*Tax Lawyers*) teach the rich how to play it so they can stay rich—and the IRS keeps changing the rules so se can keep getting rich teaching them." . . . John Grisham

"Taxes are not levied for the benefit of the taxed." . . . Robert Heinlein

What Will The "Patients Bill of Rights" Do For You?

The high cost of medical care in this country, in addition to being one of our highest personal expense items, can be directly connected to the high taxes we pay. No relief is in sight.

On the state and local level, we pay for a multitude of programs for welfare recipients, many of them health care related. Maintaining the county hospital should be included. Health insurance for government employees on all levels is paid for by taxpayers. Often with premiums far in excess of what private employers or individuals can afford. Medicaid and Medicare are taxpayer supported as well as numerous programs. Since medical expenses are deductible from income on tax returns, we are in effect subsidizing health care for just about everyone with our tax dollars. Now the state wants to subsidize prescription drug expenses for qualified senior citizens, and the cost of this will likely exceed projections.

While the high cost of insurance is often blamed, health care providers and government regulations are also factors. As citizens of the richest country in the world, we expect and demand the best of health care. We are all concerned with the cost, however, and many of us are fearful of further government intervention.

Now the Congress is trying to pass what the call a "Patients Bill Of Rights", supposedly to improve the system. Most publicized in this legislation is that it would give the right for a citizen to sue his HMO provider, assuming that is the type of coverage he has. Rest assured there are many provisions in the proposed legislation which will go far beyond this. I would guess that Americans are far more interested in affordable than in more complicated health coverage.

A recent article in "Forbes" magazine suggests this should be called the "Lawyers Bill of Rights." They feel a medical review board should review cases before a patient can sue. We don't deny that health

care providers should be responsible for their actions, but question whether this is a step in the wrong direction.

For example, it is estimated there are 40 million Americans without health insurance coverage, and this legislation would do nothing for them. The cost of health insurance coverage has made it difficult for many employers and individuals to maintain their coverage. Already, much of our premium dollars are going for settlement of lawsuits rather than health care treatment. We already hear of HMO plans raising their premiums by as much as 50% in anticipation of this legislation. The medical profession already pays huge premiums for liability insurance. These costs make up a good part of your medical bills and provide "deep-pockets" when a lawsuit occurs.

Maybe we have this wrong, but somehow this sounds like a ill-advised scheme to get the government more involved in our lives. Healthcare is one of the top expenses for individuals (11.2% for a Wisconsin wage-earner). It would be nice if the Government would sit down, analyze where all of the costs for health coverage are coming from, and come up with some valid recommendations rather than legislation favoring only a few. There should be a lot of good ideas out there someplace. How about a blue-ribbon commission? Our health care dollars should be spent to provide health care. What do you think?
JF

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

THINGS THAT MAKE US WONDER.

We do not question the actions of the DePere Board of Education in the termination of the contract with their administrator, and they probably can justify the expenditure of the \$325,000, benefits and all of the attorney fees taxpayers will have to pay. However, when school budgets are debated and approved in the fall by various school districts, how many items, often costing far less than \$325,000 are held hostage in efforts to get taxpayers to cough up more money in the name of education?

It is interesting that several state attorney generals have decided to protect their citizens from Publishers Clearing House as being deceitful in their practices, yet defend state lotteries as being a good, honest investment. At least with Publishers Clearing House you get some magazines to read.

If any version of "Campaign Finance Reform" ever becomes a reality, do you anticipate fewer negative campaign advertisements? Will our elected officials be less influenced by special interests with deep pockets rather than the majority of voters? Will the cost of being elected to office be more in line with what the job is supposed to pay rather than what political parties pay to maintain power? Will more people go to the polls because they finally believe their vote counts?

While it is comforting to know that banks and other institutions with information on our personal affairs are advising customers of their privacy policies, I haven't received any yet from the Motor Vehicle Department or Social Security Administration, who have made a practice of selling information and claiming it in the public interest because of the income they earn by doing so.

It seems downtown Green Bay is a basket case that needs new arms and legs. We wish the new owners of the mall success, and hope they can correct some of the mistakes of the past. They

got a real bargain considering the potential value of the property, and what previous owners have invested and are probably writing off. However, any business that locates in the mall does so to make a profit and this means reasonable costs and a supply of potential customers.

It still seems counter productive to spend millions of taxpayers dollars in infrastructure improvements and incentives to developers when people stay away due to the parking. We agree the cost of parking in Green Bay is fair and reasonable, but it seems to be the way that it is administered that causes problems. There are blocks and blocks of parking meters that are seldom used, yet the rates to use them and fines for violations are increased on a regular basis. Some irritating problems such as paying for an hour of parking for an extra five minutes of shopping at the mall could be eliminated by charging in half hour increments after the first hour. Parking should be an encouragement, not a discouragement to patronage.

We appreciate the efforts the Packers and their cohorts from PMI trying to obtain more parking near Lambeau Field, (and maximizing what they can charge for it.) A couple of friendly suggestions would be first, take a look at all the game time help in the concessions and other functions and shuttle them in from outlying areas well prior to game time. This could make a few hundred more parking spaces. Also, there always seem to be people around the stadium area who never go inside for the games. There are also events near the stadium attracting people who come in cars but do not actually attend the games. We agree they have every right to be there, but it could be a factor with the availability of parking, and perhaps other solutions are available

The DNR created a stink with their proposal to save state taxpayers \$181,000 by no longer contracting with private contractors to remove deer carcasses from state roadways. Not that this is a desirable job, and

that any savings to taxpayers is appreciated, but what is so complicated about having county trucks and crews do this as part of their mission as they cruise about inspecting roads, etc. We thought this was the way it was always done.

While the DNR was going to save us taxpayers \$181,000 by letting dead deer rot along our highways, how much will it cost to set up the mechanism to track and police nuisance phone calls from telemarketers? Will your local charity be included? What next, TV sets that can automatically eliminate commercials you object to?

While our legislators were able to "compromise" on a 1,139 page budget for the governor to approve, the procedure they use needs fixing. Many spending and policy items which wouldn't possibly be approved on their own are inserted at the last minute. . Something for everyone. You can hide a lot of pork and beans in 1,139 pages. These items usually surface later on as burdensome expenses to taxpayers or more laws and regulations we do not necessarily need. Public statements by our leading lawmakers indicating that they don't want the public involved because of their interference at this crucial time is most disturbing. The lead article on Page 1, Sect. B, of the July 29, *Press-Gazette* says it all.

The county suggests spending \$180,000 of taxpayer money to "study" the feasibility of a metropolitan police force. Would this accomplish anything or reinforce *status quo*?

So far the committees studying a metropolitan water system have given cost estimates for building a new pipeline serving the surrounding area, and for buying water from the City of Green Bay. Nothing yet on the cost of the city and other communities cooperating on one new pipeline at this time to serve everyone.

Just wondering. JF

THE VALUE OF MONEY.

A California jury recently awarded a chronic drug addict and smoker three billion dollars as a reward for his unfortunate state of affairs. While it is quite possible that this award will never be paid, it seems that the public has lost all sense of reason when dollar amounts are applied to government or business transactions.

How would you put three billion dollars into perspective? For example, recall the effort of the Green Bay Packers to put a \$295 million package together for stadium renovation. Every conceivable revenue source is being tapped including public tax money. It would have been possible to renovate Lambeau Field 10 times with a \$3 billion gift.

Based on projected state taxpayers revenues of \$11 billion per year, this amount would let us taxpayers off the hook for about 15 weeks. How about that for state tax relief?

Assuming that a new grade school could be built for about \$5 million. This award could have provided for about 600 of them rather than awarding it to one miserable person.

\$3 Billion equates to about \$10 for every man, woman and child in the United States, or \$600 for every person in Wisconsin if we wanted to be greedy.

A lottery prize of \$100 million seems to be the ultimate goal. This award was 30 times that amount.

We are not defending smoking or the manufacturers of cigarettes and would assume that seeking this award was probably more at the instigation of trial lawyers who stand to make a tidy fortune for their own personal benefit in the event it is not appealed. They certainly must have put on a good show for the jury.

What is most troubling is that people seem to have no concern over the consequences of paying such amounts of money. That it may cause hardship to a business employing thousands of people and contributing to the economy in many other ways does not seem to matter. We don't seem to realize the cost to all of us in the form of higher retail prices and insurance premiums and additional government regulation.

We seem to view government spending the same way. So what if Wisconsin state spending exceeds income by a few hundred million? Who cares if the cost of renovating Lambeau Field will cost taxpayers far more than all of the referendums ever approved to date for the citizens of Brown County? So what if the Federal government is a few billion, or is it trillions in the hole?

The point I am trying to make is that it is all *our* money and we should be concerned. Every little thing that effects the cost of living or the taxes we pay adds up. A recent report from the U. S. Census Bureau indicates the people of Wisconsin pay the 8th highest state and local taxes **PER CAPITA** in the country. Our taxes as a percentage of income rank even worse. Every new expense item in the budget makes the situation worse. While other states are managing to reduce the tax burden on their citizens, our legislators have just passed a budget which could significantly increase our taxes.

JF

JULY MEETING NOTES.

Regular scheduled monthly BCTA meeting held July 19, 2001 at the "Glory Years". Open discussion on taxpayer related items of current interest.

Department of Natural Resources (DNR) budget issues were discussed. The directors are unable to comprehend why the DNR cannot find \$181,000 in its \$265 million budget to pick up dead deer along state roads. Hunting and fishing license fee increases were reviewed. The DNR proposes to add up to a \$2.50 handling fee to hunting and fishing licenses to compensate businesses selling the licenses to the public. The neat trick is that the DNR will keep the 50 cents of each license fee it previously gave license sellers for their expenses.

A meeting is scheduled to be held in Bellevue on Monday evening, July 23rd to consider a county-wide police force. Given the wide disparity (over 20:1) of policing costs between certain Brown county municipalities, this will certainly be an interesting issue.

Water issues in the county were discussed. Municipalities outside Green Bay seem to have only three options for a future water supply:

- Purchase water from the City of Green Bay.
- Build a new water system.
- Cooperate with the City of Green Bay to form a county water district that would buy out the City's investment and then provide water to all members of the water district.

As the first and second options don't appear to be going anywhere, the directors agreed that the county water district option should be considered. A committee was appointed to study the various options and develop a position for the BCTA to recommend.

Frank Bennett gave an update on the Southwest High School Early Learning Center, which could be called a day care center. It is an 1,894 square foot facility, with the school district paying for construction and operating expenses. A contractor is to operate the center. No curriculum has been established, yet. Only children older than 2½ years will be accepted, effectively excluding the children of any students. Original plans were for it to operate 195 days per year, the school calendar, which would make it most useful to school district employees. Since the BCTA inquiries began, plans have been changed to operate it 12 months of the year.

The next BCTA meeting is scheduled for Thursday, August 16, at the "Glory Years." The scheduled speaker will be Ted Pamperin, President of the Village of Ashwaubenon. Details on the back cover of this "TAX TIMES."

Dave Nelson - Secretary

"There is no worse tyranny that to force a man to pay for what he does not want merely because you think it would be good for him." . . . Robert Heinlein

"The current tax code is the chief source of political corruption in the nation's capitol." . . . Richard Arney

BCTA Meeting and Events Schedule.

Thursday - August 16, 2001. BCTA Monthly Meeting. Glory Years
Washington St. Inn, 347 S. Washington St., Green Bay
12:00 Noon. Speaker: Ted Pamperin, President,
Village of Ashwaubenon.

Thursday - Sept. 20, 2001. BCTA Monthly Meeting. Glory Years
Washington St. Inn, 347 S. Washington St., Green Bay
12:00 Noon. Program to be announced.

Thursday - October 18, 2001. BCTA Monthly Meeting. Glory Years
Washington St. Inn, 347 S. Washington St., Green Bay
12:00 Noon. Program to be announced.

Regular BCTA meetings are held the third Thursday of each month at the
Glory Years (either Nicolet or Vince Lombardi rooms)
Washington St., Inn. 347 S. Washington St., Green Bay

All members of the BCTA, their guests and other interested persons
are cordially invited to attend and participate in these open meetings.
Phone 336-6410 or 499-0768 for information or to leave message.
Price - \$6.50 per meeting - Includes lunch, tax and tip.

August,
2001



“One of the evils of democracy is,
you have to put up with the man
you elect whether you want him or
not.” . . . **Will Rogers**

“You cannot influence a Political
Party to do Right, if you stick to it
when it does Wrong.”
. . . **John Bengough**

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New Members are Always
Welcome.

Call 336-6410 or 499-0768
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The TAX TIMES

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