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# ◆ The TAX TIMES ◆

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Volume 17, Issue 1

Newsletter of the Brown County Taxpayers Association

December, 2001

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## MY PROPERTY TAX BILL.

It's that time of year again; our property tax bills will be in the mail in about a week. The bill itself is made up of five components: State of Wisconsin; Brown County; municipality; school district; and NWTC. The actual increases or decreases for this year are not available as of this writing. Kerry Blaney, the County Treasurer, will be putting articles in the papers to explain the tax bill and changes from last year. I thought it would be interesting to compare my tax bill last year with the one from 1995.

I still live in the same house and have made no improvements during the time between the tax bills. The Consumer Price Index went from 148.4 in 1995 to 168.3 in 2000. This is an increase of 13.4 % for the five-year period. The house was reappraised between 1995 and 2000 and the appraised value increased by 30.3%. The total tax bill comparison is what I had to pay, meaning any credits and aids etc. are not included. I was pleasantly surprised to find that my tax bill increased by 5.2%. The largest dollar component of almost any property tax bill is their school district. For Ashwaubenon, where I live, the school tax portion decreased by 26.8%. This reduction came about because the State of Wisconsin started paying 2/3 of the school district cost during the five-year period.

Changes in the other components did not fare as well. The State of Wisconsin portion of the tax bill increased by 30%. This State tax is to pay for the maintenance of the state forest system and has been growing as we add land to the state managed system. Thirty percent is a healthy increase for a five-year period.

Brown County taxes increased during the period by 28.5%. This is an average of 5.7% per year. The increase is in addition to an equalized value growth of 68.3% during the same time period. The tax levy for the period increases by 73.3%. What this means is that the growth in Brown County for the five-year period was 68.3% and our taxes still went up. What are we going to do if growth slows, as is the prediction for the current recession? It means we, as taxpayers will have to come up with more money. We need to put a limit on how much spending we can support!

For Ashwaubenon, the tax increase for the five-year period was 26.8%. The village is larger now and requires more infrastructures. We also added new municipal buildings and added staff to our public safety organization. Somehow we need to keep spending in line with growth plus inflation or we all lose.

The NWTC comparison is the largest increase of all the tax bill components. The dollars due to NWTC increased by 31.5%. And this was before the referendum to add to the facility. We certainly are generous taxpayers in Brown County.

In summary, we can thank the State for their help with our property tax bill. We also need to keep a close watch on the other areas that make up our property tax bill. Spending is up by more than growth and substantially more than inflation during the five-year period from 1995 to 2000. Please take a minute to look over your tax bill when it comes next week. I would like to hear from you at [taxpayer@netnet.net](mailto:taxpayer@netnet.net).

## BROWN COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION.

*Frank S. Bennett Jr.*

President

**The BROWN COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION**  
**Promoting Fiscal Responsibility in Government**

## Forget The Rhetoric And Stick To The Facts On Tax Rates: A letter to the editor From the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance.

*This is a letter sent to the editor of every newspaper in Wisconsin. It addresses an annual "rite of confusion"—tax rate rhetoric by local officials. In the spirit of "truth in government," we invite its printing. Every fall at this time, local and school officials unveil budgets for the coming year. They invariably announce that the property tax rate is "frozen" or "dropping." Apparently unaware of the misleading nature of this claim, some reporters and editors repeat the announcement as news, often failing to focus attention more appropriately on the dollar and percent changes in the budget and property tax levy.*

November 12, 2001

"To the Editor:

The leaves have fallen and frost is visiting our windows. It is the time of year, once again, when local officials and headline writers fall prey to "tax-rate-itis."

This is a disease of local government officials spread, unfortunately, by some in the media.

Municipal, county, school and technical college officials proudly announce that they have "frozen" or "cut" the property tax rate for yet another year. Taxpayers are left with the impression that their December property tax bill will fall. Almost invariably, this is not the case.

A severe case of tax-rate-itis broke out in a suburban Madison-area school district last week, which illustrates how the disease works. A weekly newspaper trumpeted: "District tax rate drops nine percent." The news story quoted the school superintendent as saying, "We are very fortunate to have proposed the lowest mill rate in 20 years."

Actually, the school levy is rising 4%—not a huge amount. But, because property values in the district soared 14%, the tax rate will fall.

It is time, once again, to remind the public and press that official pronouncements of a "frozen" or "dropping" tax rate mean little.

Here is why: The tax rate is just a formula driven by the tax levy and local property values. It is simply the property tax levy divided by the total property value of a local taxing jurisdiction. It doesn't take much to realize that the tax levy can double or triple and still result in a falling tax rate . . . as long as property values rise faster than the tax levy.

How do we avoid tax-rate-itis? Simple. Be honest and straightforward about local budgets and property taxes. Focus on the dollar and percentage changes in the local budget and in the property tax levy. Forget the tax-rate rhetoric, other than to report the rate for last year and this.

Sincerely,

Todd A. Berry, President

## November Meeting Notes.

BCTA monthly meeting November 15, 2001 at the Glory Years.

Dick English reported on the alternatives being evaluated by the Water Supply Study Committee:

\* *Joining the City of Green Bay in an aquifer storage recovery (ASR) system. A mid-2002 report on this option is expected.*

\* *A public water authority (9 municipalities) building a separate line to the lake.*

\* *A pipeline only with the municipalities handling distribution. The state requires maintaining filtration. Existing municipal wells would need to be capped in four years.*

\* *Paying for a new water system with taxes instead of usage charges. In some situations, this might raise water costs to users by a factor of four.*

The tax impact of county employee pay raises was discussed. Great concern was expressed that the extraordinary benefit package for government employees was ignored in the study comparing wages for county employees with wages in the private sector. The BCTA committee structure was revised to focus upon pertinent issues. All directors will have at least one committee assignment. BCTA members are encouraged to volunteer to work on committees with the directors. We have many more issues that could be addressed with sufficient committee strength.

Questions to be included in a questionnaire to county board candidates are requested. Any members with specific questions for county board candidates to answer should send them to Jim Frink at P.O. Box 684, Green Bay, WI 54305.

BCTA officers re-elected for one-year terms were:

President - *Frank Bennett, Jr.*

1st Vice-President - *Richard Parins*

2nd Vice-President - *Gerald Slavik*

Treasurer - *James Frink*

Secretary - *David Nelson*

The next BCTA meeting is scheduled for Thursday, Dec. 20, at the Glory Years. Details in this "*TAX TIMES*."

**Dave Nelson, Secretary**

## Rep. Lasee Comments on UW Pay Increases.

We all want to believe that grown-ups will act like responsible adults, rather than like children left alone with the cookie jar. We want to believe it, but we know it's not always true.

In case you hadn't heard, the University of Wisconsin Board of Regents approved stratospheric pay raises for its top administrators. UW System President Katherine Lyall received a \$91,000 raise - nearly 50 percent. The UW-Milwaukee Chancellor got a \$30,000 raise, from \$185,000 to \$215,000; and the system Senior Vice-President got a \$24,000 raise, from \$175,000 to \$199,000.

This, at a time when the state is facing a budget deficit that could exceed a billion dollars.

Regent President Jay Smith said the raises were necessary in order to bring salaries in the UW system in line with similar positions in other parts of the nation. The supply and demand argument. I use it myself. Ironic to hear it coming from a University of Wisconsin official, and in this case, wrong. The increases were clearly not necessary.

Katherine Lyall and the others may well be highly qualified individuals who will earn every penny of their heightened salaries. But when they accepted their jobs, they did so at the salaries that were offered. Our demand met their supply. Smith's argument rings false.

It also rings false when he says the increases won't require any tuition or tax increases. Maybe not this year, but wait until next time. Smith said the increases will be covered with money already in the system's pay plan.

If they had extra money, could we, perhaps, have lowered tuition instead?

As much as I'd like to blame Smith and the Board of Regents, the ultimate blame for this fiasco rests right here, in the State Legislature.

Prior to this year, the Legislature made decisions as to pay raises for top UW officials. A proposal added to

the budget by the Joint Committee on Finance changed that, to allow the Board of Regents to do it.

With that decision, the Legislature abandoned its responsibility to allocate taxpayer money. It's the Legislature's job to decide when, where, and to whom tax money is paid. By giving that responsibility to the Board of Regents - an appointed, not an elected board - the Legislature put taxpayer money into the hands of people who were not elected by the people to do so.

The Governor of Wisconsin earns a salary of \$122,000 - less than that of the Chancellor at UW-Eau Claire (10,553 students) or UW-Stout (7,696 students), who, thanks to the Board of Regents, will make \$168,000 a year, including their \$19,000 raises. Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice Shirley Abrahamson will earn 120,000 this year - less than half UW System President Katherine Lyall's post-raise salary of \$299,000.

Every budget cycle, students and administrators from the UW system demand more service, better pay, lower tuition. They're going to want an explanation, and they're going to want to blame someone.

They'll blame the Legislature, and they'll be right. We abdicated the tough choices again.

**Rep. Frank G. Lasee**

Each week Representative Frank Lasee, 2nd Assembly District, sends out an E-Mail newsletter concerning current events in the Madison and of statewide interest.

If you or anyone you know would like to receive the "Lasee's Notes," please send an e-mail to LaseesNotes@yahoo.com or to Rep. Lasee@legis.state.wi.us with your E-Mail address and we will add you to the list of recipients. \*

"Somebody once figured we have 35 million laws trying to enforce the 10 commandments.

. . . Church Bulletin

## How Much Do You Pay In "Hidden" Taxes?

We are all quite aware of the high property taxes on our real estate and income taxes on our earnings. While these taxes are documented for us, they are by no means the only high taxes we pay. When our elected officials look for ways to increase revenue to feed their spending habits, they often look to "hidden" or taxes that the average person doesn't realize they are paying because they are included or hidden as the part of other day to day purchases. Many of these are in the form of excise taxes on specific industries or products that can significantly increase the price of products and services we buy. We will try to cover these in future "TAX TIMES."

Sales, gasoline, and tobacco taxes are examples of common hidden taxes which are frequently raised under the assumption that most people will soon forget or not notice what is happening to their hard earned money.

We have available on our website, **BCTAXPAYERS.Org.**, a couple of easy to use Excel programs which can be downloaded and used to keep track of exactly how much a couple of these taxes actually cost you. One tracks your state and federal gasoline taxes, and the other tracks you state and Lambeau Field sales taxes.

One of our members who has used these programs since the beginning of January, 2001 has shared his results with the "Tax Times." Through the middle of November, with an average gasoline expense of only \$106.00 per month, he spent over \$145.00 for the federal gasoline tax of 18.4 cents per gallon and \$210.00 for Wisconsin state tax of 26.4 cents per gallon.

Purchases of various taxable items and services so far have cost him an additional \$650.00 Wisconsin Sales Tax, plus \$65.00 for the Lambeau Field tax. At this rate, this person will spend close to \$1,200 this year on just gasoline and sales taxes .

These taxes are not deductible items on your income tax return. \*

## There Are Differences Between Public and Private Employment.

The recent controversy regarding pay raises for Brown Counties salaried employees serves to point out the differences and perhaps some similarity between those who work in the private sector and those on the public payroll. While these are only observations, we would believe it is how many people perceive the problem.

It is probable that many if not most people fall into their ultimate profession more or less by accident from circumstances resulting from their training, vocational interest, but most important what jobs are available when they are seeking meaningful employment. We all accept certain conditions as a result of our employment.

Unfortunately there are advantages and disadvantages with just about every occupation, and it is up to the individual to position themselves with a comfortable level of job satisfaction, compensation and security. The extent of training you have received is no guarantee of this satisfaction, and it seems the trend in recent years demands considerable education and experience for worthwhile positions in both the public and private sectors. You must qualify yourself and accept the conditions offered.

In every instance I can think of, private employers either manufacture or sell a product, or provide a service or profession for which employees are compensated. It can be one person working alone or a multinational conglomerate, the idea is to create revenue to compensate the employees for their labor and investors for their risk. Employees can be broken down to two distinct groups which are income producing or overhead.

Revenue from income producers must be sufficient to maintain all expenses including capital improvements and overhead (including taxes). Economic conditions and competition often

do not make it easy to raise prices if expenses cannot be met. Employees classified as overhead must depend on income producers for their compensation as they often are in no position to demand large wage increases or benefits. Their worth is established by ability to cut costs and make the overall operation more efficient than by dreaming up ways to spend more money. Management probably couldn't care less if a survey is presented showing that people with similar jobs in a different city or company are receiving better compensation or benefits. Their responsibility is running their own company profitably and smoothly with an eye on the competition.

Therein is one big difference between public and private employment.

Where a private employee proves his worth by doing his job efficiently and demonstrating ways to cut expenses in order for his employer to make a profit, a public employee can make his job appear more important by requesting more assistants, office space, and other expenditures for the budget. Any attempt at cutting expenses is vigorously defended against, as it would jeopardize the security of his position. If you disagree, take a look at the number of county employees and the office space they occupy as compared to 20 or 30 years ago. An increase proportionally far in excess of the counties population and we will venture in some cases the amount of work to be done.

While private employees seldom enjoy true job security, those in the public sector are usually safe even in cases of gross inefficiency and misconduct. We have seen several instances reported to us by the media in recent years. Public employees usually enjoy more generous health insurance benefits, vacations, retirement benefits, and paid holidays than those in the private sector.

It is difficult to determine salary levels as the job descriptions are

usually somewhat different. However, any employer must offer a satisfactory salary and conditions for advancement in order to hire qualified people. In either case, a regular schedule of wage increases, either as a result of inflation, greater responsibility, job performance, or a combination is usually outlined and agreed upon. Promotions may be harder to come by in the public sector due to stricter job descriptions and the methods by which vacancies are filled.

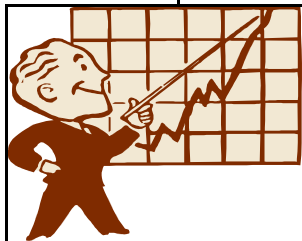
We could go on indefinitely trying to make comparisons, but the big problem is that when wage increases are granted over and above the present level, the money must come from someplace. Unfortunately, the public sector has the luxury of first determining its expenses for the coming year including salaries and benefits, and then dividing the bill amongst the taxpayers, either in the form of property taxes, sales taxes, state revenue sharing or whatever.

Why worry. The taxpayers will pay for it anyway. \*

## Next BCTA Meeting Scheduled For Dec. 20.

The next meeting of the Brown County Taxpayers Association is scheduled for Thursday, Dec. 20, 12:00 noon at the "Glory Years." State representative Frank Lasee will discuss what it takes to put a referendum item on the ballot.

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



"Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, to assure the survival and success of liberty." . . . **John F. Kennedy**

"There is no dignity quite as impressive, and no independence quite as important, as living within your means." . . . **Calvin Coolidge**

**TEACHERS UNION PLAYS POWER POLITICS. Wisconsin Labor Law Handicaps Taxpayers Ability to Negotiate Fairly!**

A recent article in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (9-27-01) reports that 372 of Wisconsin's 426 school districts still need to negotiate deals. All the contracts in the state expired June 30.

According to the Journal Sentinel story, Mike McNett, manager of collective bargaining for the Wisconsin Educational Association Council (WEAC), the state's largest teachers union, blames the state's Qualified Economic Offer (QEO) law for labor unrest. The QEO law and a law imposing revenue caps on school board spending has been a thorn in the side of the union since these laws were enacted. McNett claims that the QEO law has damaged teacher bargaining power.

Taxpayers know that teacher unions are just holding out for more! The unions have it within their power, and they have shown they will use that power, to hold the children as hostages.

The Waukesha Taxpayers League prepared a study early this year that clearly indicates that the teacher unions have used deceitful and slick tricks that make a mockery of the QEO law. This study analyzed actual salary increases of individual teachers and found that in each of the past two years the average salary increase for full time teachers exceeded 5%. This is in spite of QEO law which limits salary and benefit increases to 3.8%! Deceit is utilized often when presenting spending referenda to voters. Current targets of the union's largess focuses on school auditoriums and lavish gymnasiums that have little or no beneficial impact on academic or vocational learning and achievement.

Taxpayers must be aware that Wisconsin Labor Law enhances the union's ability to dictate with the power provided by the state legislators. Our state legislators have dealt a full measure of power to the teachers union (and all municipal unions) which seriously transgress constitutional rights. The fear of the unions, as a political force, is evident when considering the campaign treasuries amassed by the unions. Legislators cringe in fear at these vast amounts that can be used against them when re-election realities confront their campaigns. Taxpayer organizations cannot and will not generate the dollars raised by the unions, because our organizations are free and we will rely on the freedom and liberty as Americans to protect us. Taxpayers will NEVER RELY ON COERCION!

Federation of Wisconsin Taxpayers Organizations (FWTO)

**Running For Public Office.**

On April 2, 2002, a new Brown County board, Green Bay city council, and elected officials for all Brown County communities will be elected to serve for 2 year terms.

If you think you can do a better job than the person now representing you, now is the time to make your move. The pay may not be the greatest for the amount of time you will be required to spend if you do the job properly. You will be required to have a working knowledge of state and local law, and be able to work with other people as well as communicate with the people you represent and elect you to office.

While not a prerequisite, a knowledge of business management and accounting could be helpful and possibly put you a step ahead of some of our present supervisors.

Be prepared to take a lot of abuse when it is perceived you are not doing your job properly. However, the satisfaction of doing a good job can be rewarding, as you will see the results in a clean, safe, prosperous, and respected community.

There is still to declare your candidacy. Check with your local or county clerk for nomination papers and other requirements. \*

"No wonder Americans hate politics, when year in, year out they hear politicians make promises that won't come true because they don't even mean them."

. . . Bill Clinton  
Aug. 21, 1992

**Membership. Dues renewal notices being sent.**

For several years we have been sending annual dues renewal notices based on when you first became a member of the BCTA. This provides us with a flow of funds throughout the year. Also, with our renewal notices is included a free membership application for any person of your choice.

We believe that people should be more concerned with the taxes they are paying in Wisconsin, and would like to increase our membership. We invite your friends and associates to join us. We will send them a letter advising that you have referred them, send them the "TAX TIMES" and invite them to meetings, etc., for a full year. At that time we will send them a renewal invoice they can honor if they wish to continue.

Other membership promotions are in the works for the months to come, and any suggestions, references or assistance in this area will be greatly appreciated. Call Jim Frink at 336-6410.

We want to thank all of you for your prompt payment of your renewals, thank you for the new potential member references, and extra contributions. Please appreciate with our low dues and the cost of postage we try to keep our expenses at a minimum but still try to keep the "TAX TIMES" interesting and timely. \*

**Correction Notice:**

The first page of the last "TAX TIMES" listed the date as *November, 2000*. We apologize to anyone who may have been confused or inconvenienced. \*

**VISIT OUR WEBSITE  
www.BCTaxpayers.Org**

## THINGS THAT MAKE US WONDER.

The newly elected mayor of New York City is a billionaire who reportedly spent \$50 million of his own money promoting his campaign. That is his business, but you have to wonder about priorities when people and groups from all over the country are sacrificing other things to send heartfelt donations to New York to aid victims of the murderous Sept. 11, disaster. His opponents probably spent just as much.

There were a number of area school spending referendums held Nov. 6. Chilton voters overwhelmingly approved a new elementary and high school improvements including a new auditorium and swimming pool while Oshkosh and New Holstein voters strongly rejected proposed projects.

We believe this reinforces the theory that voters will gladly approve a project if the need is well presented and that they perceive the school district is fiscally responsible with their tax dollars.

Even though their county has one of the lower property tax and county spending rates in the state, the Outagamie county executive pressured their county board to enact a .5% sales tax for county purposes. The proposal was defeated by a vote of 31-8 on Nov. 5. In Outagamie County, the sales tax idea was strongly opposed by the Fox Valley Chamber of Commerce who undoubtedly were looking after the interests of their local retail business establishments and relationship with customers from Brown County as well as Outagamie County residents.

Green Bay hotels are complaining of a drop in business this fall, somewhat as a result of the Sept. 11, disaster. We still have the big Packer weekends which give the entire area an economic boost. Could more business be sandwiched in? I had a nephew planning his wedding this last spring who wanted to reserve a block of 20 or so motel rooms in Green Bay for anticipated out of town

guests. He couldn't connect with any place in Green Bay because the Packer schedule was not yet available. This is understandable, but as a result the whole affair was scheduled in a different city. My question is, do these same circumstances prevent valuable convention and exhibition business from coming to Green Bay? These things are usually planned months and years in advance.

It will be interesting to see for how long and for how much the Packers make available the 4,000 or so new tickets set aside for "Brown County residents on a lottery basis" during last years campaign promoting the new sales tax. If 4,000 additional seats were released to new season ticket holders including the \$2,000 that existing ticket holders paid for seat licenses, it could amount to \$8 million more for the stadium renovation project. How much will license plate sales bring in?

On the same subject, the Detroit Silverdome, once hailed as the finest stadium possible is being torn down after only 20 years or so of use. I wonder if they have any good used seats with backs for sale?

There has been a lot of speculation recently regarding what the cost would be to attempt cleaning up the Fox River and ultimately the rest of the Bay. While a group of paper mills is accepting most of the blame and agreed to accept certain costs, there is likely going to be a limit as to how far they will go still keep doing business in Wisconsin. Various environmental groups including high school students who are not necessarily taxpayers are beating the drum for more cleanup money from public sources. For example, a recent headline in the "*Press-Gazette*" proclaimed "*Most Say They'd Pay PCB Costs*". They claim this fact was deducted from a survey sent to 1500 Wisconsin to which only a third replied. We don't know what the other 2/3s thought.

While we agree that a cleaner

Fox River would be nice, we question whether Joe Taxpayer is that willing to foot the bill if it exceeds what the paper mills pay. Already the proposed cost is in excess of Lambeau Field renovations, the proposed cost for a new Lake Michigan pipeline, and a host of other items we will be faced with. Is the rest of the state going to be concerned with the Fox River if it becomes the states responsibility? Wisconsin is already at the top of the list for taxes, and is facing a huge deficit this year already. Quite frankly, accepting these studies as fact when the methodology is not specified can be misleading. The questions asked and the economic profile of the participants can be slanted to give any desired results. Unfortunately, we see too much of this tripe presented by the media which has the effect of forming public opinion, "based on a study." How do they come up with the cost of cleaning up the river when it has not been determined if the spoils are to be deposited somewhere in Brown County or dumped in somebody's back yard in Minnesota?

How about the UW Board of Regents granting huge pay raises to certain selected faculty members. From \$90,000+ to the chancellor on down. It is easy to grant pay increases when you can bill the taxpayers rather than base it on profits as in private industry. The UW is a taxpayer supported institution, by Wisconsin's citizens who are about the highest taxed in the country already. The state is facing a deficit of at least \$300 million this year, and is trying to save money by closing 80 DOT service offices to the public just to save \$179,000.. The UW claims some of the money has already been set aside for these raises, but it is still our money regardless of how it is spent. Whether this will improve the quality of our University system is a matter of speculation. No wonder a lot of college graduates don't realize the value of a dollar. Read Representative Lasee's article on this elsewhere in this "*TAX TIMES*."

It will probably take some time to find if making airport security people federal employees was a good idea. While some airports were already better

prepared than others, unfortunately the situation called for immediate and effective action. While working at a security point may not be the most satisfying job in the world, it is probably perfect for many people. One concern is as federal employees, we can look for them to become unionized in short order. This will add to the pilots union, the flight attendants union, the mechanics and baggage handlers, and others, any one of which seem to be able to bring chaos to the airline system as effectively as bad weather or a handful of crazed terrorists. Where is Ronald Reagan when you need him?

Higher health insurance costs for employees is being blamed for city and county property tax increases. While many private employers are being forced to use higher deductibles and pass more costs on to their employees in an effort to keep costs in line, shouldn't it also be the case with public employees? While medical insurance costs have been increasing far faster than the rate of inflation, the government itself along with health providers should share the blame with the insurance companies. Unfortunately many elderly people along with the working poor receive little help on either their insurance costs or medical expenses. They still have to pay higher taxes to support insurance for the public employees.

There is no question the economy is slowing and will create problems for all of us. Sales and income tax collections for the state of Wisconsin will be less than projected, which will likely effect their revenue sharing with local units of government. In some respects, it is difficult to understand. Much is made of the fact when people lose their jobs as a result of a plant closing, but new ventures are constantly being added to the economy, as you will notice by visiting one of our many new industrial parks. There were 9 full pages of "help-wanted" classifieds in last Sunday's paper, but nonetheless unemployment is up, and the number of homeless in the area is a major concern. The cost of human services is the largest expense in

the county budget. As the end of another year approaches, it apparently is time to re-evaluate more than just our own personal habits and problems.

There are a many things to be concerned about . JF

**National Debt Clock Update.**

On Dec. 5, the national debt stood at \$5,744,664,355,363. This represents an increase of \$2,150,509,285, or "only 2.1 Billion" in government talk since we last reported this in the November "Tax Times."

It equates to \$91,489 for every U. S. family. What did you do with your tax refund? \*

"The things that will destroy America are prosperity-at-any-price, peace-at-any-price, safety-first instead of duty-first, the love of soft living, and the get-rich-quick theory of life." . . . Theodore Roosevelt

'People are getting smarter nowadays; they are letting lawyers instead of the conscience be their guides." . . . Will Rogers

**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.**

**The State of The State of Wisconsin.**

First the bad news. Just how high are state and local taxes in Wisconsin? According to the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance, based on data they receive from the U.S.Census Bureau, Wisconsin has the 6th highest state and local taxes per capita at \$3,318. Only Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Minnesota, all states with higher average per capita income than Wisconsin rank higher.

Ability to pay? Wisconsin is 3d with an average of 12.7% of income going to local and state taxes. Only Connecticut and New York manage to take a greater percentage.

Now the worse news. The state faces a serious budget bind next year. First, there are items in the new budget that create additional spending. Also, the state has had the habit of passing deficits on to the next year budget. Then there is the economy, which was having problems before the Sept. 11, tragedy. It has been predicated that we could have a deficit of at least \$1 billion by 2003. That's about \$200 for every person in the state.

In late August, after warnings that the Wisconsin had some bad financial habits, the states bond rating was dropped. Only two states had worse bond ratings at the time, and this means it will cost more for the state to borrow money.

In the meantime, there is continued pressure from the states cities and counties for more revenue sharing because property taxes are about as high as taxpayers will tolerate. The local school districts and teachers unions are pressuring the state for greater revenues to support their goals of higher pay and smaller class sizes.

Todd Berry, Executive Director of the Wis. Taxpayers Alliance warns that options that have been unthinkable are going to be on the table—School aid cuts, revenue cuts to counties and municipalities, and UW tuition hikes. You and I will have to hang on to our pocketbooks. \*

**BCTA Meeting and Events Schedule.**

**Thursday - December 20, 2001. BCTA Monthly Meeting.**

Glory Years. 347 S. Washington St.

12:00 Noon

State Representative Frank Lasee will discuss the procedure for placing a referendum item on a public election ballot.

**Thursday - January 17, 2002. BCTA Monthly Meeting.**

Glory Years. 347 S. Washington St.

12:00 Noon

Program to be announced.

Regular BCTA meetings are held the third Thursday of each month

At the Glory Years in the Washington St. Inn.

347 S. Washington St., Green Bay

*All members of the Brown County Taxpayers Association  
Their guests and other interested parties are cordially invited  
to attend and participate in our open meetings.*

Phone 336-6410 or 399-0768 for information or to leave message.

COST - \$6.50 per meeting. Includes lunch, tax & tip.

December, 2001

*Peace on  
Earth*

"There is nothing which one government sooner learns from another than that of draining money from the pockets of the people."  
... Adam Smith

**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**  
for Details.

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