
◆ The TAX TIMES ◆

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Newsletter of the Brown County Taxpayers Association

January, 2002

MY CURRENT COUNTY TAX BILL

My tax bill for the year 2001, which I received in December, increased a total of 9.2%. Just when I thought things were going to be better, we passed a referendum in Ashwaubenon to add to the high school. My school taxes increased by 13%. I voted for the additions to the High School and recognize the impact on my taxes. The people in the NWTC district voted to add to the school facilities and my tax for the Technical College went up 21.1%. These I can understand and like it or not were voted on by the people affected. The tax for Brown County went up by 5.1%. This is another typical year for the County budget, an increase at twice the rate of inflation.

I do believe it is time to stop this year-to-year increase that is more than growth combined with inflation. There must be a way to limit the amount of money the County spends each year so that we don't tax ourselves out of our homes. With increasing property values and increased spending, we as homeowners are paying more than we should to a County government that seems to have forgotten who pays the bills.

The County budget that passed this past year included money for a settlement from the State Retirement System. Our County government elected to use that sum for daily operation despite the fact we still owe \$11 million in unfunded liability to the retirement fund. We also pay 8% interest on the balance to the retirement program. In addition, over \$1 million was removed from the general fund to balance the budget. In an effort to keep the tax bills down, money from the savings account was used which has a direct effect on our bond rating. If not careful we could be paying more for our debt just because of the way we budget.

A couple of suggestions on how we might save money. Restructure the museum, combine local library services, and restructure County government into fewer departments are a few ways that we as taxpayers could save on spending and therefore on our tax bills.

The museum is a one million dollar burden on the levy. With a staff of 15.6 full time employees, and visitors that total less than 100,000 people per year, a different method of funding or a new approach to revenue is needed. A charge for admission would chase more people away and may limit the schools from sending students. This is an area that could certainly use some creative thinking. We as taxpayers however should not continue to be forced to support the museum to the extent we do today.

The Library system in Brown County is one of the best in the nation. The number of people with library cards is about 60% of the population of the County. This is indeed a used service. When I recently toured a renovated Ashwaubenon High School, I marveled at the size and beauty of the library. The thought crossed my mind, why didn't Brown County and the School District combine the library service for the community. I know that this has worked for the Denmark community and I would like to see that sharing expanded. We as taxpayers certainly deserve this kind of government cooperation.

County government is composed of 31 different departments. This is a large number and could be reduced. The recent combination of the Port and Solid Waste departments is an example that could be used in other areas.

What are your thoughts? Do you think your Government could be run in a way to cut your tax dollar cost? Let us know at taxpayer@netnet.net.

Frank Bennett
President, BROWN COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION

The BROWN COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION
Promoting Fiscal Responsibility in Government

HIDDEN TAXES. What You Don't Know Can Hurt You.

In the last "TAX TIMES" we told about one of our members who tracked his gasoline and sales tax expenditures and found these two items alone would cost him over \$1,200 per year. The total most of us pay in "hidden" taxes each year is much more than that, however.

In 1999, the National Tax-payers Union prepared a study which concluded that state and federal "hidden" or taxes that are not easily identified amount to \$2,642 per person per year. This total does not include state and local sales taxes.

Following is a breakdown.

TAX	COST/PERSON
Corporate Income	
\$806	
Fuel Taxes	
220	
Other Excise and Sin Taxes	
109	
Employers Payroll Taxes	
862	
Workers Compensation Taxes	
49	
Unemployment Taxes	
106	
Import Taxes	
70	
Hotel-Room Taxes	
25	
Airline Taxes	
15	
State/Local Utility Taxes	
60	
Telecommunication Taxes	
41	
Severance Taxes	
17	
Insurance Premium Taxes	
34	
Occupational License Fees	
48	
Total	
\$2,462	

While most of this tax burden is imposed on business, it is all passed on to the consumer. For example, the study indicated that 35

The governments view of the economy could be summed up in a few short phrases: If it moves, tax it. If it keeps moving, regulate it. And if it stops moving, subsidize it. .. Ronald Reagan

SOCIAL SECURITY REFORM. What's Happening.

The President's Social Security Commission has completed its final draft, which is a document of 141 pages of charts, graphs and explanations. To come up with a workable plan and stay within the President's six guidelines was not realistic. The president directed the Commission to propose Social Security reform, including private accounts, while meeting the following guidelines:

- #1 Modernization must not change Social Security benefits for retirees or near-retirees.
- #2 The entire Social Security surplus must be dedicated to Social Security only.
- #3 Social Security taxes must not be increased.
- #4 Government must not invest Social Security funds in the stock market.
- #5 Modernization must preserve disability and survivors components.
- #6 Modernization must include individually controlled, voluntary personal retirement accounts, which will augment the Social Security safety net.

The Commission devised three alternative models for Social Security reform. Each of these models provides for amounts to be carved out of the Social Security payroll tax for private accounts. None of the reform models presented by the Commission accomplishes the goal set out by the President of providing solvency over the next 75 years without making huge cuts in defined benefits. This should have been a foregone conclusion since the demographics can not be changed and diverting a portion of Social Security taxes to private accounts along with huge transition expenses will only hasten the date when the tax will not be able to support the current level of benefits. So where does that leave us? If we continue as we are, Social Security's cash deficits are expected to begin in 2016. At that time we will also find ourselves with an empty Social Security Trust Fund, because the surplus Social Security taxes collected over and above benefit obligations are spent for other programs in exchange for IOUs. In order for the government to redeem the estimated \$5 trillion in IOUs owed at that time, which would extend the present level of benefits to 2038, it will have to increase taxes, borrow the funds or cut spending.

Since 1983 the Social Security system has run surpluses each year. With a change in the law, these surpluses could have been invested in private funds accumulating at interest to fund the system when needed. Not only would this have accumulated a huge surplus, but would have spurred the economy, helped hold interest rates down and increased revenues. This could be one option to begin at the end of the recession. Also, the Social Security tax base could be extended. New state and local employees could be brought under the system. In my opinion the best plan for private accounts would be a new IRA making contributions tax deductible and distributions tax-free at retirement. If some benefit cuts have to be faced in the future, for those who have the self-discipline to save would have their own accounts as a safety net. This would not benefit lower income workers as much as the average worker, but changes within the system could be made for more favorable redistribution of benefits that would compensate lower income workers.

The Commission will probably do further study, but it appears that it is possibly leaning toward recommending a reduction in Social Security benefits. Benefits were already reduced in 1983 when the government began taxing Social Security benefits. It's beginning to look like we may have to face some hard facts. In order to continue present benefits after 2016, the government would have to begin to redeem the Trust Fund IOUs at that time in order to get us to 2038. Because we paid more in taxes than required to pay Social Security benefits, your government spent the excess money on other things. In the year 2000, for example, the excess was \$894 billion. Down the line they will tax the next generation to pay off the IOUs. That is the tax legacy that our government has left the next generation. Some estimates show that after 2038 the system could still pay 70% of benefits. With a little magic and some tinkering, is it possible that the present system can still be fixed?

Jim Smith – BCTASOCIAL SECURITY REFORM. What's Happening.

Tobacco Settlement Was About Money, Not Justice.

Two years after the states won a huge settlement against the major tobacco companies, the National Taxpayers Union, (NTU) finds that very little of the \$246 billion settlement is being used to fund anti-smoking programs or to reimburse taxpayers for tobacco-related health care expenses.

In its two-years-later analysis, the NTU found that 41% of the settlement has been used by various states for health-related purposes, which don't always involve smoking. This misuse of funds has been confirmed by the General Accounting Office.

"Two years ago, the states attempted to justify their lawsuit by promising that this money would be used to

reimburse taxpayers for societal costs related to tobacco use and to discourage future tobacco use," said NTU analyst Sally Dae. "Instead, tobacco companies have been exploited as an easy source of revenue by big-spending politicians eager to fund their pet projects."

Those projects include new college scholarships, flood control, teen pregnancy programs, and remodeling schools. "But they are all contrary to the advertised intent of the tobacco settlement," noted Dae. And she warns that taxpayers will be left footing the bill for these programs long after the tobacco settlement money has been spent. States should refrain from legislation through litigation schemes that enrich lawyers and special interests but impoverish businesses and taxpayers.

"This just confirms that the lawsuit against big-tobacco had nothing to do with justice and everything to do with money," Dae said. *(In Wisconsin, tobacco settlement money was used to support the state budget in lieu of fighting tobacco related problems.)*

The National Taxpayers Union advocates lower taxes and it guards against wasteful government spending. They can be contacted at www.ntu.org.



Opportunity: lost.

Congress recently put off decisions about military base closings until after the 2002 elections - the President and the Pentagon are ready to proceed, but Congress wants to wait. Why? Because military bases impact local economies. The local Congressmen know this. So no matter what's best for the military or for all the taxpayers across the country, those bases stay open.

We can be critical of that decision here in Wisconsin, because we have so little of the military here, we're unlikely to be affected. But that doesn't mean we don't make the same kinds of decisions in the Legislature.

The Department of Motor Vehicles operates 128 service centers around the state, most of which are open only part time. Many of these centers are also in very lightly populated areas. As a result, they do very little business, which makes them a drain on the department's resources. These service centers cost money! Money for wages, equipment, supplies, and in many cases rent. Some of the service centers have a reasonable cost per transaction. Some don't.

Last year's average statewide cost per transaction was \$3. Recently, the DMV proposed a plan to cut the 48 most costly centers.

For example, the most expensive center is in Plainfield, at \$108.91; Whitewater's cost per transaction is \$21.55; Cumberland's, \$36.49; Manawa's, \$69.20.

We all want government to be more efficient, and to spend less money. At least, we say we do. The DMV's plan, though, only brought complaints about cuts in service. Constituents complained, legislators complained, and the cuts themselves were cut in half, to 24.

It's true that cutting service centers in small communities will inconvenience the people who normally use them, because those people will have to drive farther to access the same services (to places they probably go once in a while anyway).

But consider: DMV service

centers perform far more driver's license renewals than any other transaction, and drivers only have to do that once every 8 years. Most other transactions can be done over the phone, or through the mail.

This was a plan to make a small part of state government more efficient - squashed by pressure from legislators who don't want the folks back home to complain.

I've been interested in this subject for several years. In a previous budget, I tried to include an amendment that would have closed any service center with a transaction cost of \$50 or more. That proposal failed then, for the same reason the DMV's plan was less than half successful now.

Not only did the DMV not close as many centers as was economically advantageous, they're also doing what bureaucrats love to do - they're keeping the employees.

Their plan wouldn't help with our overall budget problem, because the transportation budget is funded almost exclusively by the gas tax (second highest in the nation) and vehicle registration fees. But it continues to take money away from the DOT's main mission - building and maintaining safe highways.

We could consider allowing private businesses to issue drivers license renewals, the same way private businesses sell hunting and fishing licenses. A bank, pharmacy, or other local business could easily set up for that: license renewals only require a vision test and a new picture. This would be even more cost efficient - the state wouldn't need to rent or own space, wouldn't need to hire anyone. Regular employee training and periodic inspections would be sufficient.

The DMV plan is a baby step in the right direction. Baby steps are okay, but this state needs to take strides.

Rep. Frank G. Lasee

"Democracy is the worst form of government - Except all others."
... Winston Churchill

The Unfunded Liability "Holiday".

The holiday season is here. Let me tell you about our unfunded liability holiday.

There are more than 1200 municipalities, school districts, and the state government whose employees are in the Wisconsin Retirement System. The WRS is a "Cadillac Pension Plan." It's about the most generous retirement plan you'll find anywhere in the nation.

It's also a model of good and bad government all in one. It has invested wisely and pays great benefits at a reasonable price. It has also provided an avenue for the Legislature to take \$4 billion of the fund's surplus, and spend it.

It's great to have a good retirement plan. I wish everyone had one – everyone deserves to enjoy a financially secure retirement. Four times in the last 20 years, the state Legislature has made that Cadillac plan even better. Those improvements were made on the backs of the taxpayers, most of whom aren't in the WRS, and will never see a retirement plan so good, if they see one at all.

The Legislature voted to improve WRS benefits the first time in 1981, by more than half a billion dollars. We didn't pay for the improvements then – we just made the plan better.

That created an unfunded liability in the WRS fund. That liability was \$500 million in 1981, and since then it has only grown. Currently, it's about \$2.1 billion. We pay interest on this debt at 8% a year.

Local governments are required to make payments to pay for their liability, but it's kind of like having a big credit card debt. You keep making the minimum payments, and your balance just grows.

In 1999, the state's share of the unfunded liability was \$680 million. A year later, it was \$698 million, even though we were making payments. Madison's share rose from \$31.8 million to \$32.8 million. Green Bay's rose from \$14.4 million to \$14.9 million. Not making much headway, are we?

Also in 1999, the Legislature used over \$200 million of WRS money to fund a "liability holiday," a break from making the liability payments.

Local governments have a choice to make. They can take the money this holiday provides and spend it, or use it to pay down the unfunded liability that continues to grow. Most, unfortunately, are spending it now, creating more government, knowing full well that they will have to make it up later when the holiday (spending party) is over.

Some did the right thing. Green Bay's Mayor Paul Jadin vetoed the city's budget because, instead of paying down the liability, the city council tried to use the money for short term property tax relief (don't get me wrong, I love tax relief). They lost, Jadin won. Good for you, Mayor Jadin.

Which decision is more likely to pay off for the voters - paying off liability in a generous retirement plan and saving \$4 million over time, or \$470,000 in tax relief today and more expenses next year?

This is just part of the reason I voted against this taxpayer ripoff. In 1999, we took \$4 billion of taxpayer money to make a great retirement system even better. The bill was invented on Friday, had a hearing on Monday, and passed both houses on Wednesday. Speed and complexity saved it from public scrutiny. Which is just plain wrong.

We make a lot of decisions based on the short term. Too many decisions are made that way. It's too bad more local governments don't take the long view. It's too bad the state doesn't, either. We're spending our holiday money, as well.

Rep. Frank G. Lasee

Lasee's Notes is a weekly column by Representative Frank Lasee covering events in the Legislature. If you would like to receive Lasee's Notes, please send an email to LaseesNotes@yahoo.com with your name and E-mail address

State of Washington Approves Property Tax Limits, Senate Extends Ban on Internet

Taxes. The National Taxpayers Union.

While most news regarding taxes has been rather gloomy recently, a couple of items which may have been overlooked by the media offer some encouragement.

The National Taxpayers Union, (NTU) in their monthly newsletter, *Dollars and Sense*, reports that voters in the state of Washington recently approved a referendum limiting the growth of property taxes to 1% annually, unless the majority of voters in the state or affected local jurisdiction approve a larger increase. ***The referendum won by a margin of 59 to 41%, and was vigorously opposed by politicians and the media.*** Opponents spent \$1.7 million in advertising, while supporters didn't even have to spend money on signs. They said they just relied on the voters "common sense."

(Editors Note: Washington ranks 13th in state and local taxes per capita and 20th in percentage of personal income going to state and local taxes. Wisconsin ranks 6th and 3d.)

Nationally, the senate approved a 2-year extension on the internet tax moratorium. This prohibits the creation of new taxes on internet access and services. Apparently the nations governors feel they are losing out on a major source of income, even though most states have use tax laws in place to assure of state sales taxes which could be more effective if enforced.

It was pointed out that internet purchases are already taxed as sales already contribute to various telephone, fuel, income, property, payroll and other taxes imposed upon the seller and buyer.

The National Taxpayers Union is available at

"Legislators represent people, not trees or acres. Legislators are elected by voters, not farms or cities or economic interests."

. . . Earl Warren

"Status Quo, you know that is latin for the mess we're in."

. . . Ronald Reagan

Going For The Olympic Gold. How Your Federal Tax Dollars Are Spent.

We are all proud of our Olympic athletes and the fact that the 2002 Winter Games will be held in the U.S.

What we may not realize, however, is the cost of hosting these games to you and me, even if we don't make a direct contribution or attend the games in person. It has risen dramatically the last few years. Even though cities, not countries compete and are awarded the games, the host country usually gets stuck with the bill.

A recent article entitled "SNOW JOB" which appeared in "Sports Illustrated", claims that the federal government will be directly spending at least \$1.5 billion dollars of our money for infrastructure and other expenses related to the Olympics in the Salt Lake City area. While none of this money will go directly to athletes, it represents an expenditure of about \$625,000 for each of the 2,400 athletes from around the world competing.

This is a far greater amount than was expended for any Olympic event in history. More than double federal spending for the 1996 Atlanta summer games and 20 the \$75 million spent for the 1984 games in Los Angeles. One conclusion drawn by the article is that while Utah has only 3 congressmen and 2 senators, they have pushed federal pork barrel spending to a new high.

Here are some examples where the federal money is going. New parking lots-\$12 million. Repaving highways, bridges and enlarged interchanges to handle projected traffic-\$500 million. Renting buses to carry spectators - \$25 million. A light-rail transit system to carry visitors around Salt Lake City - \$325 million. Airport improvements - \$16 million. It was pointed out that much of this expenditure will benefit certain private land owners and develop-

ers long after the Olympics are over.

While just about all of these expenses were authorized long before Sept. 11, possibly 2-3 years ago when the Olympics were still in the planning stage, it demonstrates that our elected officials can be irresponsible with our money. This, added to the war in Afghanistan, the emotional and economic aid packages connected with Sept. 11, including airline and other corporate bailouts, and a number of other headline items, all complicated by the economy make us wonder where we are headed. **JF**

Federal Debt Clock Update.

As of January 1, 2000, the national debt was \$5,746,295,761,508 give or take a few million. This is an increase of over 1.8 billion since last month, and the total is growing by about 4 million dollars a minute. The share for each U.S. family is \$91,515, or an increase of \$26 since last month. Let's hope they have present low interest rates factored in.

Annual BCTA Membership Survey to be Included In Next TAX TIMES.

Each year we survey our members regarding their concerns and views on current issues of taxpayer interest. Look for this to be included in the February issue of the "TAX TIMES."

Also the Brown County Board of Supervisors will be running for election or re-election, and we plan



on sending the candidates questionnaires covering various issues of taxpayer concern with the results being covered in a future "TAX TIMES". Help on preparing these questionnaires will be appreciated. **JF**

NEW BCTA BROCHURE AVAILABLE.

Enclosed with this "TAX TIMES" is a copy of our new revised handout brochure. This will be used for membership solicitation mailings and as a handout when presentations are made at service clubs or other groups.

It gives a good coverage of the background and purpose of the BCTA and refers to our website for other questions. We are always looking for new members, and ask that you call me at 336-6410 for additional copies of this brochure, or if you want us to contact parties who may be interested in the Brown County Taxpayers Association.

Jim Frink

Notify BCTA of Address Changes.

The "TAX TIMES" is sent by third class mail, which means that if the address is not completely correct, the USPS does not try too hard to deliver it.

We try to keep our records current, including the complete 11-digit ZIP codes if you provide them for us.

Also, a reminder that IF YOU HAVE RECEIVED your dues renewal notice, we hope that you believe the BCTA worth the small investment to have a voice in how your tax dollars are spent, and promptly send your renewal. As a volunteer organization we operate on a rather slim budget and it is rather expensive and cumbersome to send reminders.

Please call me at 336-6410 if there is any question regarding your BCTA membership.. Thank you;

Jim Frink

"The one thing sure about politics is that what goes up comes down, and what goes down often comes up." . . . **Richard M. Nixon**

"Sometimes party loyalty asks too much." . . . **John F. Kennedy**

"Governments will always do the right thing - after they have exhausted all other possibilities." . . . **Funds Law**

"When in doubt, do what's right." . . . **Harry Truman**

**VISIT OUR WEBSITE
www.BCTaxpayers.**

THINGS THAT MAKE US WONDER.

We applaud Gov. McCallum for seeking advice on balancing the state budget, but was adding former WEAC (The teachers union) executive Morris Andrews to the state payroll the best approach? As could be expected, his advice to the Governor has been to raise taxes, starting with the old reliable sales tax.

A better suggestion could be to form a blue ribbon committee of state businessmen and private economists who are experiencing the economic slowdown first hand. These people know how to make tough and necessary decisions and what has to be done to stay in business. Leave the people from the universities and other state bureaucrats out of the discussions. We need solutions, not more problems.

The Press-Gazette has reported on another survey claiming that most of us do not want to see funding for schools cut if the economy and state budget dictates. We agree that education funding ranks high on the list of approved taxpayer spending priorities, and this has been confirmed on our own annual membership surveys. Our surveys have also found, however, that if spending cuts are needed, they should be applied across the board.

This particular poll was taken by WEAC, the teachers union, and it is possible that the results were somewhat predetermined, as the questions asked and demographics of the respondents were not specified. It seems that any special interests that wants more taxpayer money can fashion a poll indicating support as long as they have a good public relations department.

Why is it that when you look at a bank statement or a bill that has to be paid, the date is always the hardest thing to find?

I just saw a TV program about the Coliseum in Rome. It was dedicated in 80 A.D., seated about 50,000, and was used for spectator events for over

400 years. No mention of the cost, but they sure don't build them like they used to.

Even at today's prices, one can still build a very nice house for \$200,000. That is the approximate price, plus interest, that it will cost for each bed at the proposed new Brown County Mental Health Center if current plans and cost estimates are approved.

If the Brown County Board of Supervisors expects taxpayers to accept such an expenditure it should be completely justified with what other counties are doing or have done, and the plans should be approved by those who have to pay the bill (a referendum), rather than by a few big spenders who only want to build yet another extravagant monument to themselves. Lets see if they delay final approval until after the spring elections.

State Senator Robert Welch suggests that we could save \$15 million by selling the fleet of 25 state owned airplanes. There probably could be some savings, but the question in my mind is why the state ever needed an air force larger than half of the countries in the world in the first place. Too much foolish spending through the years is one reason taxes are so high in Wisconsin to begin with.

The Packers Stadium Commission is chortling the fact that the .5% Packer sales tax receipts will be \$700,000 over estimates for the first year of collections. This may be good for the stadium project assuming that money borrowed will be repaid sooner and save the taxpayers some interest. Who knows what the situation will be in 10-20 years when this thing is supposed to sunset. The odds are about 1000 to 1 that the tax will remain but for some other purpose, even assuming additional taxes are imposed in the meantime.

This surplus raises a few questions though. While the state is complaining about significant decreases in revenue, including sales tax

receipts, Brown County has an increase which equates to a \$7 million more for the state at the full 5.0%. Either their estimates were flawed, deliberately deflated for some reason, or the economy is better here than elsewhere.

As much as we are led to believe otherwise, not all of a sales tax is paid directly by individuals on the purchase of everyday items. Contrary to popular belief, many businesses such as contractors, service providers, even restaurants and hotels must pay the tax on their purchases of tools and equipment, services and materials, and this represents another expense which is passed on to their customers through higher prices. In Brown County, this could account for a large percentage of the total tax.

Whatever the reason, this still represents an additional \$700,000 of taxpayer money, which, by coincidence, is the same amount the Salvation Army was working so hard to raise for their activities before Christmas.

We sympathize with Governor McCallum pondering over the estimated \$1.3 Billion deficit he inherited. What happened to the big surplus we had a couple of years ago when the economy was producing more tax revenue than anticipated? Making the University system, public safety and welfare amongst others exempt from budget cuts will leave little room for serious savings. He may wish he had put a picture of the state capitol on those commemorative coins rather than his own.

Holiday shopping is over, and "the economy" will probably be blamed if retail sales are not as expected. Perhaps "the economy" would be better if shoppers paid more attention to the source of the goods they bought. It is actually becoming difficult to find consumer items, especially clothing, produced in this country. China seems to be our biggest source. While we agree that world trade can be beneficial in many way, it seems to be getting out of hand. Especially when you can still find a few products made in the USA at competitive prices. We realize there are

many considerations in the equation, but it still represents people being employed here and contributing to the economy or being employed elsewhere and offsetting the balance of trade.

Is it possible that when the county and municipal budgets are being prepared next year, unused funds from this seasons snow removal account will balance the budget?

Just wondering. **JF**

Mike Riley to Attend January 17, BCTA Meeting.

Mike Riley, founder and president of Taxpayers Network, Inc., will attend the January 17, BCTA meeting at the Glory Years. He will distribute copies of the 90 page book, *“Crisis In State Spending, A Guide for State Legislators.”*

This book provides an excellent analysis of the problem facing many states, (including Wisconsin), covers federal laws and acts which were intended to help the states, and offers suggestions for solution.

He also recently distributed the booklet, “Recent Trends in Taxing Spending”, which compares all states by region as to their taxing and spending policies, and the ability of their citizens to pay based on income.

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.

DECEMBER MEETING NOTES. Rep. Lasee Discusses Taxpayer Referendum Options.

Regular meeting of the BCTA Dec. 20, 2001.

State Representative Frank Lasee spoke about actions that taxpayers can take to regain control of local governments’ spending. For example, presenting proper petitions for spending limits to city councils, town boards, and village boards requires these elected bodies to either enact the legislation as petitioned, or place the proposal on the ballot for the next general election. Unfortunately, this opportunity does not apply to county boards.

A discussion of enacting initiative and referendum legislation in Wisconsin followed Representative Lasee’s presentation. At this time, 24 states have enacted initiative and referendum laws. In general, initiative and referendum laws are favored by a majority of voters. Additionally, states with initiative and referendum have higher voter turnout than other states. In Colorado, for example, voters rejected a one percent sales tax increase for additional funding of K-12 education, then voted, via referen-

We Should Be More Concerned With Politics.

I wished that the residents of Wisconsin would give its politics the same kind of in-depth examination as it does with the Milwaukee Brewers and Bucks, the Badgers and the Green Bay Packers, or of that fact deer hunting, sturgeon spearing and even casino gambling.

It seems to me that there isn’t a whole lot that escapes the attention of the people on such relative, and yet seemingly irrelevant subjects. On the one hand, we complain about our excessively high tax burden, while on the other hand we vote to increase our taxes for sports complexes, play grounds, and nature trails.

I find it difficult to believe that people are so insensitive as to what’s going on in the real world.

dum, to enact a constitutional amendment to limit spending. The constitutional provision provides state spending limits controlled by the rates of growth for inflation and population. Local government spending is limited by the rate of inflation and the increase in the value of local property. Revenues collected in excess of these limits must be refunded to taxpayers. The rates of increase for state spending have been lowered compared to prior decades when state spending growth exceeded the growth of state income.

Frank Bennett will write a letter for the BCTA to Governor McCallum requesting that state spending reductions be made in the best interest of taxpayers.

General discussion was held regarding the annual BCTA membership survey of taxpayer issues, and a questionnaire to be sent to candidates for the Brown County Board of Supervisors in the spring election.

The next meeting of the Brown County Taxpayers Assn will be Thursday, Jan. 17, 2002 at the Glory Years. Speakers will Mark Quam and Mike Riley. Details on the back cover of this *TAX TIMES*. **Dave Nelson – Secretary**

They seem to be satisfied in sending a good portion of their monthly pay to Washington to be spent by those who want to protect us from cradle to grave. It is quite obvious that the more tax money collected the more Congress will find ways to spend it. It has always been my belief that money has to remain in circulation in order to have a robust economy. People with disposable incomes, that’s income after all obligations have been met, should have a choice in how that money is to spent—not government. **Gil Zieman**

“When a fellow tells me he’s bipartisan, I know he’s going to vote against me.” . . . **Harry Truman**

“Journalists do not live by words alone, although sometimes they have to eat them.” . . **Adlai Stevenson**

BCTA Meeting and Events Schedule.

Thursday - January 17, 2002, BCTA Monthly Meeting
GLORY YEARS, 347 S. Washington St., 12:00 Noon
Mark Quam, Brown County Human Services Director
will discuss the new proposed Mental Health Center.

Thursday - February 21, 2002, BCTA Monthly Meeting
GLORY YEARS, 347 S. Washington St., 12:00 Noon
Program to be announced.

Thursday - March 21, 2002, BCTA Monthly Meeting
GLORY YEARS, 347 S. Washington St., 12:00 Noon
Program to be announced.

**Regular BCTA meeting 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, payable at meeting.
Includes Lunch, Tax and Tip.



**HAPPY
NEW
YEAR
2002**

"We will not be able to afford all that we want. We will not even be able to afford all that we currently have." . . . **Michael R. Bloomberg**
New Mayor of New York City

"Prosperity is something created by people and their industries and business for which government takes credit." . . . **Ronald Reagan**

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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