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# ◆ The TAX TIMES ◆

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Newsletter of the Brown County Taxpayers Association

March-April, 2002

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## APRIL 2002

This April we have choices in 19 of 26 County Board districts. This is indeed an improvement for the electorate. Of the 7 districts that have an unopposed candidate, four are incumbents who did not sign pledges for limiting spending and sales taxes. Three of the incumbents had the courage to sign the pledge even though it made no difference in the outcome; Mary Marquardt in district 16, Bill Clancy in district 20, and Patrick Moynihan in district 21. We congratulate each of these three for letting their constituents know where they stand.

Of note in this election is that in 19 of the 26 districts at least one of the candidates signed our pledges. As you may recall, we asked candidates for the County Board districts to sign two pledges. The first pledge is to limit County spending to percent population growth plus growth in inflation percent. The second pledge is to vote against any initiative to increase the sales tax in the County. It is indeed a good sign for the taxpayer to have candidates in 19 of the 26 districts sign such pledges. A summary by district is enclosed.

Much has been said recently about the proposals made by Governor McCallum to correct the overspending in the State budget. It would appear that everyone in the State had a better plan and was willing to share it. At a forum put on by our County, every State elected official and every locally elected official expressed concern about the Governors proposal. Even speakers from the audience offered suggestions for correcting the overspending. I must compliment the Governor for presenting a plan and the willingness to discuss it. He certainly did get plenty of input. By the time this is published, the State will have a plan, and it will have been passed by both houses and signed by Governor McCallum. Unfortunately, it will be a budget that still includes one time funding from the tobacco tax. It will probably also include delaying payments from this budget into the next budget and we will start the next budget process in a bigger hole. No matter the outcome, every elected official pointed a finger at others for their part in the overspending and every one of them is right. The State overspends and the County overspends.

The State will need to continue to look at the 2/3 support of schools and will need to reduce the support for the capital part of the local school budgets. Taxpayers can no longer afford the spending spree in the new school building craze. The State will need to review how much shared revenue is appropriate for local government and do a better job in supporting what they require local governments to do. As counties exist to do the states' work at the local level, elimination of county government is a choice that must be considered. Partisan politics at the state level limits discussion and results in bad decisions for the taxpayer.

At the County level, a review of spending is indeed appropriate. Taxpayers cannot support the double inflation rate spending increases of the past. Million-dollar support for a museum with 80,000 attendees will need scrutiny. Consolidation of libraries with public schools certainly would have taxpayers paying for libraries once instead of twice. These two items alone offer up to 3.5 million dollars in savings.

**This April we have choices for the County**

**Results of Taxpayer Survey**  
*See Inside* →

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

**Tuesday, April 2, 2002 - GET OUT AND VOTE !**

There is a political axiom which states, "*It is easier to elect candidates who share your political philosophy than to change their minds once elected.*" On April 2, you will have the opportunity to elect new candidates to political office or approve the actions of incumbents. The choice is yours and we urge you to carefully decide who will best represent you and the other citizens of Brown County for the next two years. The following first appeared in the "*TAX TIMES*" in November of 1996, and still holds true today. If this is the attitude of those we elect to office, do they have your interests in mind?

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## ARROGANCE !

Concluding three years as president of the BCTA, I am reminded of events which illustrate the need for taxpayer vigilance, unity and action. I was dismayed when a **BCTA** officer proposed to a County Board committee the application of certain proven business techniques to a borrowing decision, only to have a west side supervisor reject the suggestion, 'because this isn't business...this is *government.*' I find the school districts' lobbying to undo the statutes requiring a referendum for major bonding projects to be an ironic, unfortunate lesson in citizenship. And, I was stunned a couple of years ago when some County Board incumbents blasted our Association for offering candidates the opportunity to publicly declare their position on an issue (county sales tax) of key interest to voters.

The common thread here is arrogance. Citizens can't understand government. Public involvements is unwanted interference. How dare you suggest that I declare my position on an issue?

This arrogance, this notion that government decision making be left to insiders, professional politicians and those properly schooled (read: degree in Public Administration) manifests itself in ugly ways. Taxpayers are ignored, discouraged from participation, or even met with hostility when they attempt to inquire, to influence or to advocate. Nothing better illustrates the need for concerned taxpayers to be unified, organized and willing to assert.

After all, this is not a trivial matter. It is about the economic freedom which has produced for us a standard of living second to none. Confiscatory levels of taxation destroy incentive for work, saving and enterprise. Want to be a patriot? Join a taxpayers group.

And, is anything we ask of government unreasonable?

Is it unreasonable to expect that public wages and benefits be somewhat comparable to those in the private sector?

Is it unreasonable to expect year-to-year government spending to increase, at most, the rate of inflation?

Is it unreasonable to expect public employees, in return for job security only dreamed of by their private sector counterparts, to be flexible and embrace change?

Is it unreasonable to expect leaders in government to employ the same management techniques for improving and measuring results that are commonly used in private business?

Is it unreasonable to expect real, measurable productivity gains in return for investment of tax dollars in technology?

The answer to all of these questions, of course, is "no". However, if these expectations are to be met taxpayers must become increasingly involved and increasingly heard. Because, as I've witnessed over the past few years, the insiders are ready, willing, and anxious to do the job of government without you.

**Tom Sladek, Past President, BCTA**

## RESULTS OF 2002 BCTA MEMBERSHIP SURVEY.

In the last *TAX TIMES*, we included our annual survey form in an effort to find how our membership perceives various current issues of taxpayer interest. The results enable us to establish priorities to direct out activities as an organization as well as reinforce the position we take on various issues.

Although the questionnaire was voluntary, we had better than a 35% response, and we feel the results to be representative. Following is what you told us.

**#1 – For some time, Green Bay and the surrounding communities have been discussing the future water supply of the metropolitan area. What are your thoughts on this.**

Note that 66% agreed that the city and suburbs should cooperate and build a new pipeline, sharing their facilities with a management concept similar to that used by the Green Bay Metropolitan Sewage District. 21% said the suburbs should purchase water from Green Bay while only 3% said the city and suburbs should each go their own ways.

**#2 – The EPA wants to start dredging the Fox River to remove pollutants at an estimated cost of \$308 million, to be paid for by area paper mills. Environmental groups want to go even further, dredging part of the bay, at a cost which could exceed \$1.5 billion and paid for by taxpayers. How do you feel?**

While 34% believe dredging should proceed as outlined, 65% of you said more study is needed, or that other items are more important at this time. Several people raised concerns over the possible side effects of dredging and disposal of waste. Only 1% said to keep dredging at taxpayer expense. Several of you commented that we should look for other alternatives besides dredging. Other comments received were, “We should find more about potential health hazards.” “If the paper mills pay, it will cost all of us.” “If we spend this much money, we should expect positive results.” “Why do we have to listen to the ‘environmental groups?’” “Dredging will cause more problems than it cures, leave it alone.” “The paper mills are responsible and should pay to clean it up.” “Money could be better spent elsewhere.” “This is an impossible job.”

**#3 – The state of Wisconsin estimates revenues could be over \$1.1 billion short of proposed expenses this year. What are your thoughts on this?**

74% chose the statement, “Across the board spending cuts, including school aids and shared revenue with municipalities should be made in order to balance the budget - Tax increases would not be an option. Some of the other comments we received were, “State should also cut costs, especially in low priority spending.” “Eliminate every new program started last year then freeze spending.” “We should get a larger share of the money we send to the federal govt.” “Efficiency audit and elimination of all ‘frills’ for state employees.” “Don’t let Madison go over cost of living.” One conclusion is that ALL state and local government units should share budget cuts.

**#4 – If state and local taxes were raised, what would be the fairest and least painful for all concerned?**

While 21% said raise sales and excise taxes, and 19% opted for local sales or income taxes to make up for reduced state aids to schools and municipalities, 43% of you checked other, commenting that taxes are high enough, or new taxes are not an option to be considered in Wisconsin. Draw your conclusions.

**#5 – The Brown County Board has been considering a new “village concept” mental health hospital at a cost now currently estimated at \$31 million. What are your thoughts?**

Only 12% of respondents said that construction should proceed based on present plans and cost estimates 55% said more thought should be given to cost and design not to exceed other counties with similar facilities and 25% thought other issues are more important at this time. 49% said YES, 33% said NO, and 18% were undecided about letting the voters decide this issue on a county referendum. **Continued on next page**



2002 BCTA Survey (Continued)

**Please prioritize the following list for us to be involved with as areas of taxpayer concern.**

We listed 12 issues which are currently under discussion which could have a significant impact on the taxes we are paying, and asked that you indicate the five items you thought to be most important. Our involvement would not necessarily indicate endorsement or opposition to these projects as much as we believe the public should be as well informed as possible as to where their tax dollars are going, and that proper priorities are placed on what taxpayers feel is most important at the time.

Our survey listed the items in alphabetical order, and the results below are shown by the order of importance you indicated.

We also asked for other items of taxpayer concern, and these included: Affordable health care, Park & Recreation spending, Unfunded liabilities to the state retirement fund, Casino gambling problems, Find an engineer who can figure how to repair the DePere bridge without closing it, Paying for state and federal mandates, Getting Amtrack to Green Bay, and making a state by state comparison to find how other states and counties manage to provide services without the high taxes we have in Wisconsin.

**Do You Feel That More, Less, or OK As Is Tax Money should go to The Following?**

With fewer tax dollars available to fund the many demands for public services, we wanted to find if there were areas where possibly taxpayers would be willing to cut back or if they believed greater spending was justified. Again, they were listed on the questionnaire in alphabetical order, but are presented on the chart on the following page in the order that respondents felt that more tax money should be spent.

One conclusion we drew from our results is that taxpayers are not looking for new ways for our elected officials to spend money. We had asked some of the same question last year, and found that this year there was a far greater reluctance to spend more money on anything. For example, last year 70% of our respondents suggested spending MORE money on roads and bridges, 41.6% said spend more for libraries, and 37.1% more for police and fire protection. This year, more spending for roads and bridges was favored by only 19%, behind a new water supply and just ahead of downtown development at

14.1% and fire and police protection with 13%. No one in our survey approved more public spending for the Arena and Convention Center, Public employee benefits, or Lambeau Field related projects. Also, there were no votes for increased spending for higher education and colleges, although this may be due to a feeling that these projects are already well funded and could make better use of their resources.

One conclusion we could make is that many of us are disturbed by the high taxes we are paying in Wisconsin, and the fact that with the states situation there is little likelihood for improvement. Many people have problems of their own without having to pay more taxes – often for services and items that are not considered essential. This view may be contrary to the recent poll conducted by the *Press-Gazette* and United Way indicating some approval for increased spending for many items considered as “quality of life” factors while any increased spending our respondents favored was for such traditional items as police and fire protection, schools and libraries, economic development, etc.

ITEM	Spend More	OK As Is	Spend Less
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Numbers indicate percentage of responses.  
BCTA

Compiled by Jim Frink and Jim Smith –

The final portion of our survey asked various questions on taxpayer related issues that have been in the news lately. Yes and No Responses are indicated by percentage.

	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
<b>Do you believe that public funding (taxpayer money) should help finance political campaigns?</b>	<b>6.9%</b>	<b>93.1%</b>
<b>Would you support a .5% sales tax for county purposes in addition to the Lambeau Field Tax?</b>	<b>2.7%</b>	<b>97.3%</b>
<b>Do you support increasing the property tax for county purposes?</b>	<b>4.2%</b>	<b>95.8%</b>
<b>Do you favor continuing state support of school operating expenses at the present 2/3d level?</b>	<b>82.6%</b>	<b>17.4%</b>
<b>Do you favor present spending cap limits imposed on public schools?</b>	<b>95.9%</b>	<b>4.1%</b>
<b>Should spending caps be imposed on county spending?</b>	<b>94.3%</b>	<b>5.7%</b>
<b>Should spending caps be imposed on state spending?</b>	<b>95.8%</b>	<b>4.2%</b>
<b>Should candidates for public office pledge not to raise taxes without public approval?</b>		<b>84.7%</b>
<b>Should a supermajority (2/3) be required by state and local governments to raise taxes?</b>	<b>84.7%</b>	<b>15.3%</b>
<b>Do you believe more government services should be privatized?</b>	<b>81.2%</b>	<b>18.8%</b>
<b>Specific areas you would suggest.</b> Mail delivery, Social Security administration, Mental Health Center, Waste pickup & recycling, Administration & Management, Clerical help, School Janitors, Libraries, Surveyors, Water Dept., Road Maintenance, Surveyors, Public transit, Arena and Convention Center, Museum, Jails and Prisons, Golf Course, Farm Bureau. Also, more consolidation and shared services.		

**CONCLUSION.**

We want to thank everyone taking the time to complete and return these surveys. These will be very helpful to us and it is obvious that a great deal of thought went into your responses. We believe the results are an accurate representation of how most taxpayers in Brown County and Wisconsin feel about how our tax dollars are spent or should be spent.

The membership of the Brown County Taxpayers Association consists of a wide variety of interests including elected officials, business owners, retired people on a fixed income, and those who are just trying to get by with a job whereby paying taxes is only one of the challenges they face.

We note that most of our members seem to take a great interest in current affairs and are quite knowledgeable about what is going on in government. We have tried to be as objective and accurate as possible with this survey, and invite and questions or comments you may have. **Jim Frink**

## Are Our Legislators Doing Their Job?

As reports come out of Madison it appears our legislators will again skirt the tough issues regarding fiscal responsibility. The tobacco settlement funds, funds which could help solve some healthcare expense issues for our less fortunate citizens for decades to come, will be sold for a pittance of their value for a one-time credit card payment for the current shortfall. The final deal will be made in a back room outside public view and hearing. The newspapers seem to avoid any mention of alternative plans for a freeze/cut combination as proposed by Senators Ellis, Cowles, Welch, Kanavas, Fitzgerald And Lasee. The Fifth Estate is also losing it's validation with citizens. It no longer is willing to print the full story. No one trusts media for reporting the facts, we seem to only get half the picture. I get the feeling that our leaders and the media assume they know so much more than the rest of us, full discussion or disclosure is not necessary.

Is it any surprise our citizens don't speak up or vote. Government is becoming irrelevant to us. The only real solution to get action seems to be through the recall process. Legislators and the sheer size of all state governing bodies offer no meaningful solutions to common sense problems. The citizens of this State deserve much better. We manage our own homes and businesses with success despite the ever greater tangle of taxation and regulation. To quote Will Rogers, one of America's plain speakers of the Depression Era, *"Thank God we don't get all the government we pay for."*

**Richard Parins - BCTA**

**National Debt. Update.** As of March 20, 2002, the U.S. National Debt was **\$5,751,008,550,938.00**. That's five and three quarters Trillion Dollars, or about \$91,590 for every family in the country. So far in 2002, the federal govt. has spent over \$872 Billion. No wonder a million doesn't sound like much any more.

"A politician's words reveal less about what he thinks about his subject than what he thinks about his audience."  
 . . . **George F. Will**

"No government ever voluntarily reduces itself in size. Government programs, once launched, never disappear. Actually, a government bureau is the nearest thing to eternal life we'll ever see on this earth."  
 . . . **Ronald Reagan**

"To live under the American Constitution is the greatest political privilege that was ever accorded to the human race."  
 . . . **Calvin Coolidge**

## VOTE – Tuesday, April 2, 2002 – VOTE

The most important item facing Brown County voters on April 2, will be the selection of the County Board of Supervisors. The new board must address many crucial issues during the next 2 years including the new mental health center, bridges, and balancing the county budget. Following is the revised list of candidates after the primaries, and their responses to two questions asked them by the BCTA. **#1-Pledge to Limit County Revenue Increases** by voting against any initiative to increase the county sales tax, and **#2-Pledge to Limit future County Spending** to the growth in population plus growth in inflation.

### CANDIDATES FOR BROWN COUNTY BOARD

Candidate	district	pledge 1	pledge 2	comments
Antonneau, Ron (I)	1			phone in support
Graves, Jr., Fred	2	yes	yes	
Schmitz, Eugene (I)	2	no	no	wouldn't sign
Borlee Michael	3	no	no	letter in support
Nicholson, Andy	3	yes	yes	
Gower, John	4	yes	yes	
Schmitt, Jim (I)	4	yes	yes	
Krueger, Jack (I)	5	no	no	no promises
Miller, Robert	5	yes	yes	
Haefs, Dan (I)	6			no reply
Homan, Mike	6			no reply
Hansen, Jane	7			no reply
Gilbert, Tim	7			no reply
Kaye, Harold (I)	8			no reply
Charles, Kathleen	9			no reply
Zima, Guy (I)	9	yes	yes	
Bicoy, Brent (I)	10			no reply
Evans, Patrick	10	yes	yes	
Vanderleest, John	11	yes	yes	
Verheyden, Brian	11	yes	yes	
Johnson, Kathy (I)	12			no reply
Allen, Mark	13	yes	yes	
Vanden Plas, Merlin (I)	13	yes	yes	
Kuehn, Kevin (I)	14			no reply
Vachon, William	14	yes	yes	
Collins, Pat (I)	15	no	no	Sent note
Junkerman, Otto	15	yes	yes	
Marquardt, Mary (I)	16	yes	yes	
Daul, Alice	17	yes	yes	
Wanamaker, William	17	no	no	wrote letter
Schillinger, Patrick (I)	18			no reply
Van Deurzen, Joe	18	yes	yes	
Fleck, Mike (I)	19			no reply
Coenen, Roy	19	yes	yes	
Clancy, Bill (I)	20	yes	yes	
Moynihan, Jr., Patrick (I)	21	yes	yes	
Watermolen, Keith (I)	22			no reply
Collier, Mark Anthony	23			no reply
Shadewald, Richard (I)	23			no reply
Simons, Kenneth (I)	24	yes	yes	
Vokracka, Jerry	24	yes	yes	
Lund, Thomas	25	yes	yes	
Williquette, Katherine (I)	25			no reply
Kryger, Ronald	26	yes	no	
Fewell, Steven	26			no reply

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

Copy of letter to Gov. McCallum

**BROWN COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION**

P. O. Box 684  
Green Bay, Wisconsin 54306

March 9, 2002

Governor Scott McCallum  
State Legislators representing Brown County

Gentlemen and Ladies:

I am writing once more to underscore the BCTA's opposition to any use of taxpayer money for the funding of political campaigns. Many of you have heard from me before on this subject.

Recently we have become increasingly concerned about this matter as various events have occurred:

1. Federal "campaign finance reform" measures have advanced in the U.S. Congress. I'm certain you are aware that certain aspects of these measures will be challenged in the courts should they become law.
2. Investigations into specific actions by legislators or legislative staff which may have violated law by the use of public resources on legislative campaigns has become a major news story. While these matters involve election activity and state laws, they are not relevant to campaign finance, yet many proponents of campaign finance schemes are inappropriately linking the two as a means of generating more public support for their proposals.
3. A small handful of editorial writers in the Brown County press are clamoring incessantly for campaign finance reforms which, unfortunately, include taxpayer funding of campaigns. One newspaper has virtually turned over its op-ed pages to the Madison-based groups most actively supporting tax funded campaigns. Despite this issue being a darling of the press, you and I both know that rank and file voters have little interest in it, and that taxpayers oppose use of their money for campaigns.

The BCTA has long been on record in absolute opposition to use of tax monies for political campaigns. I have included for your reference some materials that explain our opposition. I believe these materials approach the issue in a clear, logical manner currently absent from the coverage in the press. I ask that you do the right thing on this matter, and vigorously oppose any attempts to use tax money for campaigns.

Very truly yours,

**Frank S. Bennett, Jr.**  
**President, Brown County Taxpayers Association**  
**BCTA Takes Stand on Campaign Finance Re-**

"I feel like Zsa Zsa Gabor's fifth husband. I know what I am supposed to do, but I don't know if I can make it interesting."  
... Al Gore

**form.**

Every year Wisconsinites are polled on the question of whether tax money should be used to fund political campaigns. We're not talking here about a telephone poll which samples a few people with questions constructed to manipulate, and then projects their response across the whole population. This poll is complete and absolute. Those questioned must respond in favor, or in opposition – you can't say "not sure" or "no opinion", and you can't refuse to answer. Each and every taxpayer responds to this poll every single year.

Sound at all familiar? It should, because this poll is conducted right at the top of the front page of every taxpayer's state income tax return – the Wisconsin Form 1. Taxpayers must either refuse to have their tax money used for political campaigns, or they may designate a one-dollar contribution to the state election campaign fund.

And, year after year, the citizens speak with unmistakable clarity as over 90% refuse to have even a single dollar of their taxes go to campaign funding. **Good for them!**

Why does the public so thoroughly reject tax-funded campaigns?

First, the people know that in a free society participation in political campaigning must be an individual and voluntary choice. They don't want government making that choice for them.

Second, the people understand that government-funding of campaigns will lead to government control of campaigns, and ultimately to a government which perpetuates the status quo.

Third, and most importantly, people get outraged over the notion that tax money should be seized from them, under threat of incarceration, and given to political candidates with whom they disagree. Can you think of a greater injustice?

Amazingly, despite the clear and principled arguments against tax money for campaigns, and in defiance of the annually stated will of the taxpayers, there are elected officials and members of the press who are proposing tax funding of campaigns.

If you believe in freedom, if you believe in a government of limited scope and power, and if you believe government has already found far too many ways to tax and spend, then you should be an opponent of any effort to fund political campaigns with tax money.

**Tom Sladek – BCTA**

In the recent BCTA membership poll, over 90% of respondents indicated "NO" to question #10, "Do You believe that public financing (taxpayer money) should help finance political campaigns" This corresponds closely with the number of taxpayers nationally who actually check-off a political campaign contribution on their income tax returns.

On March 9, the letter in the preceding column was sent to Gov. McCallum and legislators representing Brown County regarding our position regarding the use of taxpayers money to finance political campaigns.

## Rep. Lasee on Campaign Finance Reform.

Not to be outdone by our colleagues in the federal govt., the Wis. State Legislature has produced it's own campaign finance reform bills. The Assembly passed its version , 87 to 12 I was one of the 12

The bill is over 70 pages long. I recommend it, if you have trouble sleeping, but not if you're trying to clean up elections. The bill seeks to provide incentives for candidates to abide by spending limits, and to accept government grants to fund their campaigns. If only we had enough government money in our elections, our elections would be clean. The whole idea is wrongheaded.

Supporters say government funding will get corruption out of politics. Why? Because politicians will not be as dependent on people who have their own agendas - people and special interests who seek to influence politicians and public policy.

Of course, welfare for politicians won't clean up the electoral process, because it does nothing, and can't do anything, about the real problem in Wisconsin's elections. Interest groups, which spend hundreds of thousands, sometimes millions of dollars to influence our elections.

The Wisconsin Education Association Council (WEAC) spent well over a million dollars in the last election cycle to support two Democratic candidates. Should we give enough tax money to their Republican opponents to offset that spending?

If we don't, they have two options. They can raise it themselves, and (according to CFR supporters) be beholden to those contributors, or they can ask another interest group to spend on their behalf, and be beholden to that interest group.

If we do, how much is enough? More importantly, what other good things could we have done with that money?

Either way, the goal of CFR supporters - to remove money influence, and therefore corruption, from politics - has failed. Was it ever really possible? Some people will always find a way around the rules. There's power in politics. Power attracts those who want it. People who seek power will be susceptible to corruption, because they want to keep or expand their power. They want an advantage. Some people will be willing to do anything to achieve and maintain their power.

Money is like water. Try to block candidates from it, and it will flow through the cracks some other way. It will still be in politics. What we need is full reporting of where the money comes from. Who is supposedly garnering influence with, or at least agrees with this candidate? If the candidate is being influenced, at least we get to know where the money came from, and what he did with it. That's not always the case with outside groups.

An active, involved, educated electorate - that is the only cure to corruption in politics. Even if we did provide 100% funding of political campaigns, with enough to offset any other efforts from outside groups, what then? To whom would candidates be beholden?

To the government. To the incumbents who sit in power, and who can change the campaign finance laws as they wish. Money wins elections, because it buys communication with voters - that's a good thing. Giving the government control over the money means giving government, and the ruling party, control over campaigns. Ask any group who takes government money - if you take it, you follow the rules that come with it.

Does it still sound like a good idea?

Rep. Frank G. Lasee

## Campaign Financing and Lobbyists.

Will Rogers once said, "*A lobbyist is a person that is supposed to help a politician to make up his mind, not only help him but pay him.*" Paying politicians may not be true, but the dictionary describes lobbyists as "those who job it is to try and influence legislators or other public officials for or against a specific cause." In other words, it is their job to influence the outcome of legislation for the special interest groups which employ them.

How much influence do lobbyists have on legislators in Wisconsin? Apparently, quite a lot. The Wisconsin Ethics Board has an excellent web site, [www.ethics.state.wi.us](http://www.ethics.state.wi.us) which gives more information than you probably want to know. For example, 630 organizations employing lobbyists are listed, including everything from Indian tribes to labor unions. Predominant are large manufacturers, other business interests, associations, and other government units. All of these special interests seem to have something to gain by the passage of specific legislation. Often in the form of special considerations or additional state spending. I couldn't find any listing for interests protecting taxpayer interests, however. Also listed were 774 lobbyists authorized to carry on their trade in Madison. Many of these are former legislators and government officials skilled in the art of influencing legislation.

Also provided were specifics of legislation each organization is concerned with, as well as the amount they have spent. We learn that 29% of recent lobbying efforts has been on state budget related problems, and my guess is that most of it is looking for more of our state money. Check the website and draw your own conclusions.

One of the concerns of "Campaign Finance Reform" is the influence placed on our elected officials by the political contributions which place and keep them in office. We can be sure that while lobbyists follow the rules, they somehow remind their contacts of their employers contributions. It's all part of the game and the people who pay the taxes get left out in the cold.

We congratulate our representatives who realize that true reform measures have yet to be proposed, and these should receive overwhelming bipartisan support if they mean half of what they say. **JF**

"I'm in favor of letting the status quo stay as it is."  
... Anonymous Wisconsin Legislator

"Politics is the gentle art of getting votes from the poor and campaign funds from the rich, by promising to protect each from the other."  
... Oscar Ameringer



## Support Government Spending Limits.

With Governor McCallum's budget shortfall plan come the difficult choices legislators have been remiss to deal with for many years. At local and state levels our representatives have used one-time budget surpluses and settlements to "balance" the budget. There has been no compelling reason for government to stay within their means. No effort was made by our legislators, save a very few, to limit spending, or God forbid, to save money for future capital expenditures.

All voters and taxpayers are complicit in this scheme, because we re-elect these same political leaders and are elated when our particular interests benefit from the pork they bring home. Unfortunately, one man's pork is taken from another's larder. Today we find ourselves facing budget deficits, and the only real solutions are to cut spending or increase taxes. The weak amongst us will up the credit limit, increase taxes and increase spending. The good amongst us will do that which is difficult, but financially sound, limit spending until our house is back in order.

This all sounds good, but here is the reality. People: Get ready to have new taxes foisted on you - third highest in the nation still leaves room for us to be first or second. We have a dearth of leadership and we will wallow in debt for decades to come.

Those who will raise your taxes will have a compelling argument. Our libraries will close, schools will lose all recent gains, garbage will line the streets which will be in disrepair and unplowed, police and fire services won't be there when we need them, but there will always be enough for the finest in public buildings, public trails and preserved spaces, jails, health centers, new college facilities, arenas, and stadiums.

Something is wrong on the face of it. We will tax our elderly from their homes, drive business from the state for high taxes, drive our youth from the state for the lack of jobs given a highly taxed business climate, but we will be made to feel guilty for not paying enough. I don't buy the argument when 47 other states are doing something better than that. ' Don't let them tax us to pay for the lack of discretion and leadership they have demonstrated. We must support spending limits for government.

Richard Parins -

BCTA

## Wanted ... Clout!

I am suffering from a pernicious malady! I have been ill for decades and didn't even know it. My disorder has come to light only in the past couple of years. I think I began to notice the symptoms about 6 months after I joined the BCTA. I have learned that my infirmity has a name and a cure. And as I attend more and more meetings of the BCTA, read this newsletter, and confer with those I look to as experts, I know that I am slowly recovering! You see I am suffering from **Political Naivety**, a dread disease! I recognized it when I began to have doubts about elected officials. All of them be they from Federal, State, County, City, Village and Town.

My problem was that I innocently expected those elected to represent me according to the agenda they espoused when I voted for them. Instead, after a short time in their new office, they seem to be voting not as they promised but according to an agenda proposed by someone else. Perhaps it's one proposed by someone more powerful or a peer that can do them a favor at a latter date. Or maybe their vote is traded to make a "deal".. Who knows? Is it right, or is that "just the way the business of government is done". I don't know, and that may be the root of my dysfunction. I do know this however: The people of Wisconsin have shown their displeasure on many occasions in the past few years. Dissatisfaction has been manifest in Milwaukee, Kewaunee County, Sturgeon Bay and others. And it's no surprise that in each of these instances the heart of the issue was taxes! Recall may not be the best answer in addressing presumed unsatisfactory performance, but it sure makes the message clear.

I think there is a better method to present elected representatives with our wishes on matters of taxation. The Brown County Taxpayers Association has used it effectively on many occasions, but I think we can be even more effective. That method is simply to use the power of our organization. But, consider this. The membership of the BCTA (200 strong) represents less than 1/2 of 1 percent of those who took the opportunity to vote in recent elections. Granted, we are a very vocal group, and often represent the opinion of those who are not members. And that's the key! With a larger membership our voice is correspondingly louder ...more powerful! We need to be better heard! We need more **CLOUT**; To do so we must increase our membership. **You can help!**

Every person out there who votes in agreement with the positions taken by the BCTA is an eligible candidate for membership in the BCTA. You know people who think as you do. If every member of the BCTA were to recruit two or more new members our Clout would triple. Log on to our website [bctaxpayers.org](http://bctaxpayers.org), click on the JOIN button and print out some membership forms to distribute. Or call 336-6410 or e-mail Jim Frink at [Frink@ExecPc.Com](mailto:Frink@ExecPc.Com); he'll mail you some forms or mail them to your potential members. He'll also send copies of The **Tax Times**. Your participation in an effort to sign up more members is the quickest, easiest, and least expensive way to increase our Clout and be better heard by those who are expected to listen.

Ron Erickson, Membership Chairman, BCTA

**VISIT OUR  
WEBSITE**  
WWW.  
**BCTaxpayers.Org**

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

"Why does a slight tax increase cost you two hundred dollars and a substantial tax cut save you thirty cents."  
... Peg Bracken

## THINGS THAT MAKE US WONDER.

A recent proposal suggested exempting Wisconsin college students from sales taxes on purchases of text books. The annual cost in lost revenue to the state and counties was estimated at \$4.2 million. While well intended, there are plenty of other individuals and groups in Wisconsin facing financial hardships compounded by the high taxes we already pay. It makes little sense to create new loopholes which can easily be abused while at the same time new sources of taxation are being explored.

The high cost of a college education seems driven by an expensive and inefficient system built on the premise that any expense is justified in the name of education. Paying the sales tax like everyone else allows students to participate in a "real world" experience.

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President Bush is proposing huge budget increases for national defense, and most people would probably agree. No word of where the money is coming from however. Wouldn't we all like to see the Dept. of Defense and other agencies perform their missions without stories of thousand dollar toilet seats or contractors bilking US for millions and billions on failed or inefficient programs. How about a "PORK TEST" review for every new expenditure?

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The Wisconsin Indian tribes operating gambling casinos have been conducting a high-profile advertising campaign to have their gaming compacts extended to 20 years from the present 5 year levels. While many citizens either patronize the casinos or have no objections to their presence, they still are a business with a tremendous impact on our general economy. We are in no position to question federal treaties, etc., or their claims of the economic benefits provided. However, there should be proper controls in place to provide an equitable amount of their income to the state and local governments, the same as any other business, and some accounting established to determine if addictive gambling is causing problems. Agree?

Even the UWGB is facing state

imposed budget cuts, with their public relations staff busy explaining the hardships they face if taxpayers don't give them more money. Did I read recently they are planning on sending the men's basketball team to Alaska for a pre-season event this fall? We realize this is probably a recruiting tool for needed talent. Not taking anything away from their high profile and successful basketball program, but it would be interesting to see what the balance sheets of all UW system sports teams add or possibly detract from the total picture.

The Resch Center is scheduled to open later this year, and like everyone else, we hope that it fulfills its promise to the community. Meanwhile questions are raised about the fate of the Veterans Memorial Arena.

We acknowledge that it will continue to be a drain of taxpayers dollars to maintain. However, when 10,000 people find how far they have to walk to the new arena there will likely be a push to replace it with a parking ramp as being more important. Worry about who will pay for it later. In the meantime, lets not forget that one of the most pressing arguments by the powers that be to build the new structure was that Green Bay was losing huge amounts of convention business due to the lack of adequate facilities. The KI Center is filling a niche, but is exchanging a 5,000 seat building for a 10,000 seat venue, holding far more people than our hotels, restaurants, and transportation systems can handle the answer? The argument was for more facilities, not a bigger one and this would include the arena.

It is amazing that politicians in Washington and Madison still keep predicting revenue surpluses in a few years. Unfortunately they use their voodoo math to keep proposing new and enlarged spending programs to be paid for somehow in the future. Then we wonder why taxes are so high.

In an effort to control expenses, the state has proposed eliminating about 900 jobs, including 150 from the Dept. of Revenue. While this might

be considered as good news to some of us, the fact is that a conscientious DOR compliance officer or auditor can create several times their cost each day by doing their job properly. This is done simply by enforcing existing laws and rules, and in most cases, the only persons offended are those deliberately trying to cheat on their taxes. By far, most people are honest in paying taxes due and comply with the system. Self-compliance is one of the features which makes the US system unique from other countries. However, deliberate tax evasion is a problem and if laws are enforced it can save the rest of us lot of money.

Do you ever wonder what the Governor and Legislature were thinking when they signed the budget into law last summer? To actually increase spending when all signs at the time pointed to a reduction of revenue, and then have to scratch to make spending cuts is completely irresponsible. Agree?

The suggestion has been floated by some of our well-meaning legislators that perhaps the cost of maintaining the state technical school system by imposing district-wide sales taxes of perhaps another .5%. They would call this "property tax relief." Please, not again. Every single argument against additional sales taxes is present. Replacing a tax with a tax only leaves a void to be filled with additional spending and creates another burden. Don't these people care about Wisconsin's high tax reputation?

One of the cornerstones of the Packera stadium renovation package was a commitment by the State of Wisconsin to provide \$9.1 billion "transportation aids" for the "development, construction, and improvement of bridges, highways, parking lots, etc." Last fall, Gov. McAlum presented this amount to the Packers. Now the City of Green Bay is considering widening Lombardi Ave. to accommodate increased game traffic - apparently at city expense. Are we missing something here?

Do you ever get the impression that rather than encourage people to get out and vote, the media would rather make a news story publicizing the poor

voter turnouts we do have?

As could be predicted, the UW system has responded to the governors' budget cuts by threatening to freeze additional fall enrollments. Rather than make meaningful cuts in their overhead costs or roll back the recent huge salary increases granted their top administrators, they will probably get away with their blackmail. Apparently there is no one on their staff teaching business efficiency that they can consult.

A new source of federal and state revenue has been in the form of lawsuits against business's perceived as violating the law, damaging the environment, or whatever. For example, government units are raking in billions from their lawsuit against tobacco companies. Much of this is being used for general purposes as a revenue source rather than the smoking related problems as originally intended. At home, the paper companies are committed to at least \$300 million for PCB pollution cleanup. Government is still trying to get a big payoff from Microsoft's deep pockets. These are just a few examples of business being used as a source of government revenue. What next? Arthur Anderson and other accounting firms for the Enron mess. Brokerage firms for the fall in stock prices? My vote goes to the trial lawyers making huge profits at our expense from all this madness.

It is now estimated that new tougher prison sentencing laws are costing Wisconsin Taxpayers almost \$200 million annually. Our prisons are more overcrowded than ever, creating additional security and rehabilitation problems. Over 100,000 of our citizens, or 1 of 54 is either locked up or being monitored. While most of us seem to approve of tougher sentencing laws, especially with individuals considered dangerous to society, does it make sense to keep so many people incarcerated at a cost comparable to a productive state employee at a time when state employees are being eliminated in an effort to save taxpayers money?

Now a group called "Is My

Medicine Legal Yet," has conducted a poll and had it publicized in the media which profoundly claims that 80% of Wisconsin residents approve the use of marijuana for "Medical Purposes.." Maybe they are right, but my guess is that they have their numbers reversed.

They do, however, claim their largest support comes from Dane County, with 90% approval. This could be correct as the people down there seem to smoking something.

Now there is another study, sponsored by Wisconsin Indian tribes claiming that 24,500 new jobs and \$50 million annually could be added to the states economy if their gaming compacts were extended for another 30 years. This apparently assumes a large increase in gambling activity and the question is when all factors are considered if this is what we really need?

Debate continues on the need and cost for new bridges in Sturgeon Bay, DePere, and other locations. Historically, the Brooklyn Bridge in New York was opened in 1883, and constructed with 1880 technology. The railroad bridge across the Fox River just south of Green Bay was also built about that time and is still in service. They just don't build them like they used to.

Just wondering. 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.

## February Meeting Notes.

Regular monthly BCTA meeting ,Feb. 21, 2001 at the Glory Years.

**Edward Jensen**, a candidate for the Green Bay Board of Education, reported that he is running a grass roots campaign. He expressed concern that this election is likely to produce a third Green Bay School Board member with serious conflicts of interest.

Introduced were Brown County Board candidates: **Mark Allen (District 13)** is a Town of Scott dairy farmer challenging the incumbent county board supervisor. **Brian Verheyden (District 11)** reported that many of the citizens he has met are concerned about county spending and the proposed Mental Health Center costs. **Bill Vachon (District 14)** is an environmental engineer. He stated that we must accept the status quo or try to do something about it, so he is challenging an incumbent board member. **Mary Marquardt (District 16)**, an accountant, is running unopposed. She appeared to explain that she pledged to oppose increasing county spending above inflation plus growth ant to oppose a Brown County sales tax. Her pledges were not listed in the last *TAX TIMES*. **Ken Simons (District 24)** is an independent businessman and taxpayer advocate running for re-election.

The candidates voiced various concerns about our present direction, indicating that we need much more responsible representation on the Brown County Board.

BCTA President Frank Bennett announced that he planned to testify at the budget hearing on Monday, February 25th. He has four proposals: **#1**-Close the museum to save \$1,600,000. **#2**-Work to share county and school district library services. **#3**-Roll back the \$1,200,000 pay raise. **#4**-Delay the Mental Health Center construction until Brown county can afford it.

Numerous other proposals to cut the costs of government operations were discussed by those in attendance.

The next BCTA meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 21.

**Dave Nelson – Secretary**

**BCTA Meeting and Events Schedule. (Mark Your Calendars)**

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

**Tuesday - April 2, 2002. County Wide Elections.** Brown County Board of Supervisors. Green Bay City Council, Town and Village supervisors, DePere Bridge Referendum.  
**BE SURE TO VOTE !**

**Monday - April 15, 2002. State and Federal Income Taxes Due!**

**Thursday - April 18, 2002, BCTA Monthly Meeting.**  
GLORY YEARS. 347 S. Washington St., 12:00 Noon  
Speaker pending.

**Thursday - May 16, 2002, BCTA Monthly Meeting.** GLORY YEARS.

NOTE: *Next "TAX TIMES" material deadline will be April 29, and will be mailed prior to the May 16, meeting.*

All members of the BCTA, their guests and other interested parties are cordially invited to attend and participate in our open meetings.  
Call 336-6410 or 399-0768 for information or to leave message.  
**COST - \$6.50 per meeting, includes lunch, tax & tip.**

**Tuesday, April 2, 2002**

Be Sure To

**VOTE !**

"Bad officials are elected by good people who do not vote.:"

. . . George Nathan

"Let us not seek the Republican answer or the Democratic answer but the right answer."

. . . John F. Kennedy

"He serves his party best who serves his country best."

. . . Ulysses S. Grant

**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**

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***Inside This Issue***

**Election Time - April, 2002**

**Arrogance!**

**Results of 2002 BCTA Membership Survey.**

**Are Our Legislators Doing Their Job?**

**National Debt Update.**

**Candidates for Brown County Board.**

**BCTA Letter to The Governor.**

**Opposition to Public Financed Campaigns.**

**Rep. Lasee on Campaign Finance Reform.**

**Campaign Financing and Lobbyists.**

**Support Government Spending Limits.**

**WANTED.. CLOUT!**

**Things That Make Us Wonder.**

and More.