
◆ The TAX TIMES ◆

Volume 17, Issue 9

Newsletter of the Brown County Taxpayers Association

October, 2002

COMMON SENSE

When it comes to taxes, we all wonder what could be done to better use the tax dollar that is available. It struck me that many tax dollars are being spent on items that don't make sense. At the federal level we send money to people for not growing crops. At the state level, we start new programs when we have a huge deficit, and at the local level, we spend money to support institutions that very few people use. Maybe a little common sense in spending our tax dollar would save us all a few bucks.

Money to help farmers is thought to be a good idea. We believe it will enhance the small farmer and allow him or her to survive. In reality, only a small amount of the money to support the farmer goes to the small farmer; most of it goes to the big corporate farmer. Money to support tobacco growth doesn't make sense when we are trying to curb the use of tobacco. Arresting corporate executives for fraud is a good idea and should also be applied to the federal government. Billions of taxpayer dollars go unaccounted for each year and little effort is expended to find these funds. We need to improve the system so future tax dollars can be accounted. We need to hold our elected officials just as accountable as we hold our corporate leaders.

At the state level we have a deficit. To provide for a balanced budget last year, money from future smoking payments was used. At the same time, a new senior prescription drug program was put into effect. This new program will increase the cost of running the government, and our lawmakers did it without a clue as to how the program would be funded in future budgets. The state continues to buy land. When every tax dollar needs to be used wisely, more land is being removed from the tax rolls. Should we use today's tax dollar to reduce future income? More campaign funding is being supported with taxpayer dollars. When so many dollars in spending is unaccounted for in revenue, we need to limit the spending just as you and I as individuals need to do when our income is reduced. Now is not the time to add more public funding of campaigns, not the time to add new programs, and certainly not the time to spend future income for today's activities.

At the local level we need to be diligent in using common sense when it comes to spending. How can we continue to support the premium health care coverage of county employees and welfare recipients? How can we continue to support the financing of a museum that has fewer visitors each year? How can we support two library systems when common sense would tell us one is enough? How can county government continue to increase spending when we are losing businesses and jobs? When the base is getting smaller, that is what we need to do with spending.

With the election coming up next month we need to learn where the candidates stand on the issue of taxes. Have they demonstrated holding the line or have they just attacked their opponent for doing something? We will be subject to a barrage of advertising and most of it will either be half-truths or totally fiction. We must sort out the truth and vote for the persons who will insure our tax dollars are spent wisely if it needs to be spent at all.

Frank Bennett

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

Comments on "The County Budget."

In the September, "TAX TIMES" cover article, we observed that if a \$ 30 million mental health center were added to the counties bonding, it would increase the debt service by about \$3 million per year. We received the following from Human Services Director Mark Quam.

"Mr. Frank Bennett, President Sept. 10, 2002
Brown County Taxpayers Association
Dear Frank:

Just a note to correct an error in your column on the County budget in the September 2002 "Tax Times."

The net of new tax levy cost for a new Mental Health Center would be about \$1.7million per year, after considering revenues that we receive for providing the service. This would be for a 20-year bond; the external revenues continue on for the depreciable length of the building, or 35 years.

The portion that is levy funded is outside the State's levy limit caps and as such wouldn't be deliberated in the County's budget process. It would equate to a cost for Brown County residents of roughly \$14 per \$100,000 of taxable worth in property.

As a practical matter, if we continue in the business of satisfying the State's mandates for public service we must eventually pay attention to our infrastructure needs regarding buildings. The problem of meeting our obligations will continue unless we begin to look more long term than the next election. If possible, I would appreciate you setting the record straight on the bonding impact. Thank you.

Sincerely, *Mark A. Quam*
 Human Services Director"

Our response.

We do appreciate that Mark reads our publication and took the time to respond to our comments. Please note that he states the "new Mental Health Center would be about \$1.7 million per year, after considering revenues that we receive for providing the service." In the article about the budget I stated "it would add almost 50%to our indebtedness and about \$3 million a year to debt service." Personally I see no conflict between the two comments. Normal estimates for annual cost for a 20-year bond at about 5% interest would be 10% of the bond cost. I do wonder what additional services would bring in an additional \$1.3 million in revenue and if now is the time to consider adding new services. A discussion with Mark may provide a better understanding of these issues and we will keep you informed. *Frank Bennett.*

September Meeting Notes.

Monthly BCTA meeting held Thursday, Sept. 19, 2002, at the "Glory Years." Called to order by President Frank Bennett at 12:00, followed by introduction of members and guests. Discussion was held regarding the previous meeting, the Brown County Sheriff candidate debate held on August 16. Comments received from the participants and their managers indicated the meeting was well conducted and successful.

Becky Weber, candidate for the 5th Assembly district, and Frank Lasee, 2nd Assembly district incumbent gave brief presentations supporting their campaign positions.

Frank Bennett announced that we have been invited to participate in a "Vision for Brown County Forum" to be conducted at the Resch Center, and that anyone from the organization could attend and participate.

Discussion was held regarding the BCTA annual meeting. This will be scheduled for the next meeting date, October 17, at the Glory Years. Any members interested in becoming a director should contact Frank Bennett. Frank will also arrange for an appropriate speaker, and announcements will be made in the October "TAX TIMES".

Mike Riley, Taxpayers Network, Inc., distributed copies of an article from "Personal Finance", which rates Wisconsin at the very bottom for retired people to reside. This is due strictly due to the high taxes we pay, as compared to other states. Mike pointed out that this is particularly disturbing inasmuch as the wealthier retirees who choose to live elsewhere take a lot of investment capital along with them, and it definitely has an effect on the economy. Unfortunately we are losing much of this asset. It was also pointed out that Wisconsin was suffering a substantial net loss in college graduates who choose to move to other states after they graduate.

Mike also distributed copies of the 2002 "Small Business Survival Index", which measures and rates the states accordingly to policies and conditions effecting entrepreneurship. Wisconsin ranks poorly in virtually every criteria. Copies of these reports are available from Taxpayers Network, and will also be available at the BCTA annual meeting along with other publications of taxpayer interest.

Dave Dillenberg and Dick English gave updates on the proposed Hobart waste transfer station and the Metropolitan Water District.

The next BCTA meeting will be the October 17, at the Glory Years, and will serve as the annual meeting. Our speaker will be Green Bay Mayor Paul Jadin. Details on the back cover of this "TAX TIMES."

Dave Nekson – Secretary

VISIT OUR WEBSITE
www.BCTAxpayers.Org

"Political corruption begins with every voter who votes his pocketbook instead of what's good for the country. There is little difference between the selling of his vote by an elected official or the selling of his vote by a voter to whatever candidate promises him some benefit." . . . Jon Roland

"No mans life, liberty, or property are safe whenever the legislature is in session." . . . Mark Twain

Wisconsin Rates Poorly for Small Business Survival.

Each year, the Small Business Survival Committee, an independent, non-profit, Washington, D.C., organization promoting the formation and survival of small business's rates each state as to it's policies and overall business climate as relates to small business. Overall, Wisconsin rates well below the national average.

The Top 10 Benefits from Small Business.

- 10. Small business (firms with fewer than 500 employees account for more than 99% of all employers.
- 9. Small business ownership has been accelerating among women and minorities.
- 8. Small business accounts for 96.5% of all U.S. exporters.
- 7. Small business accounted for nearly 98% of the growth of U.S. exporters between 1992 and 2000.
- 6. They account for 47% of all sales in the U.S.
- 5. Small businesses generate 51% if all U.S. private-sector output.
- 4. Small businesses produce 55% of innovations.
- 3. Small businesses produce twice as many product and significant innovations as large firms, and obtain more patents per sales dollar than large business.
- 2. Small businesses employ 51% of private-sector workers.
- 1. Small business create the bulk of new jobs, on average, accounting for 75% of job creation each year.

A number of factors were weighed and factored into the report, including personal and corporate income taxes, capital gains tax, alternative minimum taxes, property taxes, sales, gross receipts and excise taxes, death taxes, unemployment tax rates, health care costs, gas taxes, crime rate, energy costs, workers compensation rates, size of state government and various other state regulations effecting business.

Wisconsin ranked 31st of the 50 states. Rankings of our neighboring states with which we are competing for business were: Michigan #11, Illinois #13, Indiana #15, and Iowa #44, and Minnesota #48.

While Wisconsin ranked favorably in such categories as health care, utilities cost, crime rate and workers compensation costs, they were in the top section of most of the tax items. For example, only 15 states have higher personal income tax rates, and 17 have higher corporate tax rates. Only 10 states have higher property tax rates, 13 have higher unemployment tax rates and only 1 state, New York has a higher gas tax than we do. While 31 states have higher effective sales tax rates than we do, it is the combination of relatively high rates in all of the other taxes that give Wisconsin its unfavorable rating.

Mike Riley, president of Taxpayers Network, Inc., has copies of this report (no charge) available for anyone who is interested. He will be in attendance at our October 17, BCTA meeting and will be happy to give you a copy.

"Mark Your Calendars"

BCTA 17th Annual Meeting

Thursday, October 17, 2002

12:00 Noon at The "Glory Years"

347 S. Washington St., Green Bay, WI.

Speaker: Green Bay Mayor Paul Jadin
Mayor Jadin will speak on his vision for Green Bay.

Review of BCTA Activities During The Past Year.
Nomination and election of directors and officers and discussion of Plans for the coming year.

Mike Riley, President of Taxpayers Network, Inc.
will be present, and distribute copies of
Various Taxpayer Publications including
"50 State Comparison"
"Economics & Taxation"
"2002 Small Business Survival Index"
"Economics and Prosperity"

Price - \$6.50, Payable at Meeting.

BCTA members, Guests, and other interested persons are cordially invited to attend.

Details on Back Cover of this "TAX TIMES."

Wisconsin's School Debt Rises Dramatically.

The Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance reports that total long-term debt of Wisconsin's 426 school districts increased 383.5%, from \$982.5 million to \$4.75 billion from 1990-91 to 2000-01. Increased building activity is the main reason. Total school enrollment, however, only increased 12.3% during the same period, while school expense spending increased 55.3%. During this same period, consumer prices rose 31.8%, personal income rose 69.6%, and average household debt rose 101.7%.

One way of measuring and comparing the debt between the various school districts is the amount of debt per pupil, which is \$5,457 per pupil statewide. It was interesting to note from the report that West DePere had the 7th highest debt per student in the state at \$18,285 each while DePere was 8th highest at 17,926. Green Bay's debt per student was higher than the state average at \$6,745 while Milwaukee and Madison were lower at \$2,429 and \$2,875.

The 1994 legislation which allowed schools to obtain 2/3ds of funding from the state for capital projects is credited with the large amount of new construction during the 10 year period. It also is somewhat responsible for the states financial condition. In the meantime, the schools seem to want more.

National Debt Clock Keeps Ticking Away.

As of October 1, 2002, the total on the U. S. National Debt Clock when I checked it stood at **\$6,660,169,826,492.**

This is an increase of about \$50 Billion since we last checked it in June. Presently it is increasing at the rate of a million dollars every 17 seconds or so, and amounts to a debt of \$106,069 for every family in the country. You don't have to worry, however. It's the government's money, not yours. *(At least that's what Washington wants us to think.)*

"Why did corporate governance checks and balances that served us reasonably well in the past break down? An infectious greed seemed to grip much of our business community."

. . . Alan Greenspan

"The point is that you can't be too greedy."

. . . Donald Trump

TAXPAYER ISSUES.

The following two viewpoint articles, one by our Congressman Mark Green, and the other by 2d Assembly Dist. Representative Frank Lasee cover issues very important to taxpayers.

First, Federal Judges wield a great deal of power. We have all seen countless cases where they have made decisions which effecting us, but which have been contrary to previous legal decisions, our beliefs and institutions, or common sense. Example, the recent decision of a California judge banning the pledge of allegiance in schools. Once appointed to office, they can remain for life. As Mark Green says, "There's a time and a place for partisan politics, but selecting federal judges isn't it."

The other article by Rep. Frank Lasee concerns the cost of health care and health insurance coverage. This is probably the biggest single factor driving up the cost of property taxes and other state taxes due to the lavish benefits mandated to our public employees. It should be a top priority for our representatives to address.

Judges denied, justice delayed. The U.S. Senate must stop playing political games with federal judicial nominees.

by Congressman Mark Green

"Rejecting a qualified nominee because of... ideological disagreement...sends a message to the public that the confirmation process is not a principled exercise but an expression of political power. Both messages are corrosive to the ideals that must animate a first-rate judicial branch." **The Washington Post.**

For most taxpayers, it will come as no surprise to hear that we have a serious problem these days in Washington: too many partisan politicians trying to bring too much partisan politics into important decisions where partisan politics just doesn't belong.

One of the most troubling symptoms of this problem is the Senate's recent rejections of a number of judicial nominees put forward by President Bush.

The process for appointing federal judges used to be pretty straightforward. When a vacancy would open up on the federal bench, the president would put forth his new choice for the job. This nominee would then go before the Senate, where senators would closely examine his or her credentials. Usually, as long as the person had the integrity, smarts and experience to serve as a high-quality federal judge, the Senate would approve them – without paying much attention to their personal political beliefs.

Today, however, things have really changed. In recent years, we've unfortunately seen a Senate bent on playing politics with these nominations. If you're nominated for a federal judgeship these days, it's often not enough to be fully qualified – intelligent, honorable, experienced and well-respected. These days there's a final hurdle you have to pass: a series of political "litmus tests" constructed by politicians and special interest groups working hand-in-hand to push their brand of partisan politics into the judicial branch of government.

We recently saw a perfect example of this kind of partisan politics run amok in the nomination fight over Priscilla Owen, a Texas Supreme Court justice nominated by President Bush to serve as a federal appellate judge. Justice Owen was unanimously voted "well-qualified" by the American Bar Association. *The Houston Chronicle* praised her "proper balance of judicial experience, solid legal scholarship and real-world know-how." And in her last campaign for re-election to the Texas Supreme Court, she was supported by 84 percent of voters – Democrats and Republicans alike. Despite all this, however, the Senate Judiciary Committee killed her nomination on a party-line vote, with every Democrat turning their back on her excellent credentials and rejecting her based on her conservative political views.



As of last week, we had almost 80 total vacancies on the federal bench. That's far too many, and it's delaying justice for folks across America. We need judges, and we need them now.

Soon, the Senate will be considering another Bush judicial nominee – a man named Miguel Estrada. By every measure, he is tremendously qualified for the job. He's a Republican, but even former Clinton officials have good things to say about him. For example, former Clinton appointee Robert Litt said "Miguel is an absolutely brilliant lawyer...I always felt that he was a talented and responsible advocate." Estrada has said time and time again that he'll make decisions based on the law and not on his own personal opinions of what the law ought to be. Despite this, his nomination is still in jeopardy because of partisan politics.

There's a time and place for partisan politics, but selecting federal judges isn't it. The Senate needs to stand above the fray and help put highly-qualified people with integrity on the federal bench regardless of their political opinions.

Congressman Green's office can be reached toll free at 800-773-8579, or E-Mail to mark.green@mail.house.gov.

Could The Cost of Health Care Be Reduced?

By Representative Frank Lasee.

Health care costs are one of the biggest issues in Wisconsin and in the U.S. It is getting more expensive at a much faster rate than inflation. One thing you can count on: when that happens, people will ask the government to help.

Unfortunately, Medicare and Medicaid (including BadgerCare) have become examples of how the government can make things worse in the process of making them better.

According to the Wisconsin Health and Hospital Association, Wisconsin's Medicaid program reimbursed only 78% of costs Wisconsin hospitals incurred while serving Medicaid patients. Wisconsin ranks 45th in Medicaid reimbursement – only five other states pay their hospitals at a lower rate than we do.

That means for every Medicaid patient hospitals, doctors, dentists, and other health care providers lose money. Taking Medicaid patients means you lose money, and you have to do government paperwork in addition.

If a grocery store is losing money on a particular product, they drop that product, or perhaps they'll make up for it by charging even more for another product.

If a doctor is losing money on a particular patient, what is he likely to do? Stop seeing the patient, accept the loss, or make up for it by charging more from other customers – individual payers and insurance companies.

That means higher costs for those insurance companies, who then raise premiums. That means higher costs for the individuals who are paying for their own health insurance, and the employers who offer a health benefit to their employees. Higher premiums mean that fewer people will be able to afford their own insurance, and fewer employers will continue to offer it.

This means that we are all paying a hidden Medicaid tax: the government has offered tax-funded health care, but won't fully pay for that health care. Therefore, we all pay higher prices to make up the difference.

Another way Medicaid, Medicare and BadgerCare force prices upward is by restricting the supply of services. Right now, there are vast stretches of Wisconsin in which there are no dentists – zero – willing to take these patients. Too much hassle, too much red tape, and too little money.

Because of that shortage, a lot of people who need a dentist are, instead, going to the emergency room, where they can be seen, but where no one really has the skills to help them. That visit is charged to Medicaid, even though the problem wasn't solved. A future visit to a dentist costs the taxpayer still more. Price controls were added to these government programs in order to keep costs down. They haven't succeeded: special interests continue to pile more and more services into government health care, while the taxpayer is stuck with the full cost, whether through taxes or through cost-shifting.

So perhaps it's time we forced a little honesty into government health care, and required the government to make sure payments are high enough to prevent cost-shifting onto our hard-working citizens.

The State of Wisconsin spent over \$2 billion general purpose dollars on Medicaid and BadgerCare in 1999-2001. Add

the federal money spent on those programs during the same period, and the total rises to nearly \$5.8 billion.

With the state is facing an enormous deficit, it would be madness to suggest increasing the amount we spend on Medicaid, regardless of how much good it does.

Madness, yes, but that's what I'm suggesting. For the next few years, at least, we need to do everything we can to reduce state spending. But by paying as much as we do for Medicaid, but not more, we're hiding the true costs, and this is something to seriously consider.

Medicaid/Medicare cost shifting and the fact that providers aren't fully reimbursed for their services pushes up insurance and health costs for the rest of us – a hidden tax, which falls most heavily on those who can afford it the least.

Increasing Medicaid reimbursements will mean the state spending more money. It could be several years before we're ready to do it.

However, consider a few reasons for raising the rates. A doctor has two patients on his afternoon schedule: patient A has private insurance, while patient B is on Medicaid. Patient A means a higher rate of return, with less red tape. Patient A will tend to receive better care.

More and more doctors and dentists decline to take patients on Medicaid. There are lots of reasons for this: reimbursement rates are low; the red tape and paperwork creates an enormous amount of extra work; they can't charge Medicaid if a patient is a "no-show." Raising rates would help keep more providers willing to see Medicaid patients, thereby increasing access to health care for low-income families.

Under-reimbursing health care professionals who see Medicaid patients is simply not honest. Health care is a major issue in this state and this country: access to good health care is one of the most important things we can have. We want everyone to have it. But we don't want to pay for it.

And finally, funding Medicaid at a higher level would reduce cost-shifting, which will mean lower health costs for everyone.

According to the Legislative Fiscal Bureau, increasing our payments to 80% of the bill (not the costs) would cost Wisconsin an additional \$311 million, and would cost the Feds an additional \$463 million.

Someone is bound to say that, once hospital administrators realize we're paying a percentage of bills, they'll just charge more so they can make more. Not if we do it right. Not if we secure the prices somehow, perhaps by indexing them to inflation (which may not be enough, because it is rising much more slowly than health care costs) or some other reasonable standard. We won't just write a blank check and let the providers fill in the amount.

But, at least, we can reduce the Medicaid-induced pressure on health care costs, we can show our doctors and dentists that we really do know how important their services are, and we can improve access to good health care, especially for those who don't have it. What are your thoughts?

Rep. Frank G. Lasee

THINGS THAT MAKE US WONDER.

People are signing up by the thousands to be on the states "No-Call" list for telemarketers. Hopefully this will result in fewer unsolicited and annoying phone calls for all of us but it will likely take a while to see how well it works.

When the law was written, exemptions were provided for political campaign calls, religious and other "non-profit" organizations, and even organizations selling merchandise made by the handicapped. We can be sure that it will not take long for telephone solicitors to find loopholes to exploit.

At this time, it appears that plans to build a county run waste transfer station in the village of Hobart are proceeding despite protests from residents.. From what we read, and as often seems to be the case, plans were made and proceeded with as far as possible before the public had a chance to comment. Probably no one wants this type of facility in their neighborhood, and the economics of transferring and hauling dozens of truckloads of solid waste to distant landfills each day is still difficult to accept. Unfortunately this is a serious problem that will only get worse as times goes on. Solid waste (and sewage) will continue to accumulate at a faster rate while space and acceptance for its disposal will continue to decline. Regulations and concern for the environment will not make disposal any less expensive. Whatever happened to the technology where *all* solid waste was shredded into small pieces, metals, glass, and other solids were sorted mechanically, and what was left over was burned in environmentally approved power plants to produce energy. It is obvious we cannot keep dumping our waste in somebody's back yards for many more years.

We respect the expertise of the people who propose hauling our garbage 50 miles or so to get rid of it, but suspect we are possibly being misled by the cost savings they publicly project. Driving an expensive truck on our already crowded highways, with an expensive driver burning expensive fuel with the amount of waste that is generated still sounds it

came from the same mathematics that determined building a new jail would save us a bundle because we wouldn't have to transport prisoners to other counties

California has passed legislation providing for paid "personal leave" for public and private employees. Recall that this was mandated nationally a few years ago, but employees did not have to be compensated for the time they were absent. It was only a question of time until employers had to pick up the tab as a paid benefit. This benefit will look great for employees, and likely to be abused to some extent. As with any such benefit, someone has to pay for it, and the cost of living will be the bottom line. Personal leave for government employees would be paid 100% by taxpayers.

Plans are underway to convert more old railroad beds to recreation trails, and objections are being heard from adjacent property owners. This has been a rather constant controversial issue not necessarily resolved to everyone's satisfaction. The trails have been popular with users, but property owners are wary of their privacy and protection of their rights.

The Wisconsin DNR has long used the lack of funds as an excuse for not having more wardens in the field to regulate hunting and fishing regulations. Presently they are petitioning the Federal government for funding to combat Chronic Wasting Disease. We acknowledge they have a lot of responsibility with maintaining a balance between our growing population and diminishing resources, and probably do not receive the credit they deserve.

Nonetheless, we question the expenditure of \$325M to purchase 85 acres of isolated swamp in Suamico, to breed northern pike, or \$220M for 40 acres of wetland on Washington Island. Forty acres is only 1/16 of a square mile, and at \$5,500 per acre, makes the announced reason of this purchase for "hunting, berry picking, bird watching and cross-country skiing." rather expensive. The DNR is also ready to begin

construction on a \$5 million showpiece office building for 150 employees in Green Bay. While funding for these projects will probably come from various sources including the federal government, it still represents taxpayers money. It would take a lot of hunting and fishing license sales to cover these amounts.

It would seem that with unemployment already in the 5% range, and peoples savings diminished by their investments it would be a bad time for our elected officials to dream up new ways to spend money. Pay close attention to what the candidates say and promise prior to the elections this November. Question both where the money for their campaigns is coming from and what will happen to your pocketbooks after the election.

The City of Green Bay spends a lot of money revitalizing the Broadway and Downtown areas. We agree it is important for the entire community and commend Mayor Jadin for his vision. In the meantime, the city still seems convinced that parking meters in these areas are necessary for economic survival. We agree the cost to park is minimal, and that control is needed to regulate available parking for the benefit of everyone. It's an expense which shouldn't necessary be borne by property taxpayers.

However, consider that county offices, the court house, city hall, etc., are all surrounded by several blocks of meters with few alternatives. One doesn't know if a visit will take 10 minutes or an hour, and parking violations are expensive and harassing. Do all of the unused meters surrounding the downtown area tell us that there is no need to go there or that people are intimidated by the parking utility? While much is being done to revitalize Broadway, most of the parking meters sit idle indicating a lack of patronage. The question is if revenue from parking is sufficient to offset other taxpayer related expense and discourage more private development. We don't have the answer either.

A recent editorial in the Appleton "Post Crescent" stated that "Public money key to true finance reform." There is no question that many

political campaigns are a disgrace to our democracy. Paying the IOUs to contributors after the election often results in unethical practices, often at the expense of the rest of us.

Is public money to finance campaigns the answer? It probably sounds like a good idea to candidates for higher office who must spend much of their time and effort in raising funds for their campaigns. Television time can be expensive. The "Press-Gazette" often points out that the candidate with the most money to spend is the winner even though this can be an excuse for losing. There is no question that the financing and ethics of politics should be revised.

Is this where you want your tax dollars to go? We asked this question on our 2002 BCTA survey, and only 6.9% of the respondents said yes. This number corresponds roughly to the number of taxpayers state-wide authorizing a portion of their tax dollars for political campaigns on their income tax returns. While there may be some merit to public financing, most of us would rather choose for ourselves how our political campaigns are financed and where our support money goes. Currently we are seeing a particularly negative and expensive campaign being waged for the governorship of Wisconsin. The election won't be held until November 5. Would public financing make the accusations being made by the candidates any more truthful? Would using public funding to pay for the ads we are seeing be prudent use of taxpayer dollars?

One problems with recycling has been the lack of a market for the materials that have been collected and sorted. A bigger demand would make it more practical. ~~One solution could be to provide more tax breaks or economic incentives for developers who find viable uses for quantities of recycled materials.~~ Unfortunately tax breaks and other such benefits are often abused by those taking advantage of the system but in this case it could be worth looking into.

While the cost for a family to attend a Packer game is about the league average, we wonder if the price incurred for the seat license to season ticket holders could be factored in? We realize this

is standard practice for most of the new stadiums being built, usually at a cost much higher than ours. How do you put a value on a conformable seat with a back on it?

One nice thing about Wisconsin is that we are not quite as goofy as California. Their popular referendum initiative laws had placed 19 questions on the November ballot. This prompted the City of San Francisco to issue a 300 page "pamphlet" distributed to 400,000 eligible voters in an effort to explain what they were all about. The \$2.8 million cost to taxpayers included 40,000 copies printed in Chinese and Spanish. We wonder if this brings out a larger voter turnout than in Wisconsin?

The Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance reports that property taxes in Wisconsin claim 4% of personal income as compared to 3.9% in Illinois, 3.6% in Iowa, 3.3% in Michigan and 3.2% in Minnesota. The national average is 3.3%. Part of this high percentage is because the average income in Wisconsin is less than other states, and part is due to the fact that more property tax money is spent on public schools than other states.

We received the new catalog from the Packers Pro Shop, and noted that if you place a mail order or go through their website they do not provide for payment of the applicable Wisconsin county or Brown County Packer sales taxes. The collection and reporting of these items is required by every other merchant doing business in the state of Wisconsin. They also seem unaware that shipping charges in addition to merchandise is subject to sales tax when shipped to customers in the state of Wisconsin. It is nice that your purchases "help the Packers win." The Wisconsin sales tax laws are annoying and cumbersome, but the state and other counties in addition to the Packer Stadium project need money also.

With all of the misleading mudslinging attempting to influence our vote for governor of Wisconsin, it is no

wonder people have a poor opinion of politics and politicians. With polls busy trying to ~~predict the winner and margin of victory,~~ it is understandable why fewer people even bother to exercise their rights to vote. These polls seem to change with the impact of the latest TV commercial.

One highly publicized poll prior to the Democratic primary predicted the results based on interviewing 281 potential voters throughout the entire state. This equates to only less than 4 voters per county, but the results were accepted as accurate. Whether these polls provide a useful service or simply determine who has the best polling system probably boils down to which candidate you believe in the first place.

It is still a month to the election, and we have seen new highs in negative campaigning from the beginning. Let's hope our people have some confidence left for the winner after the dust settles.

Always a lot of things for us to wonder about. **JF**

"The pleasure of spending tax dollars locally ought to be closely tied to the pain of raising tax dollars locally." . . . **Jerome Warner**

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

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.

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The TAX TIMES - October, 2002

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

Thursday - October 17, 2002. BCTA Annual Meeting.
GLORY YEARS, 347 S. Washington St., 12:00 Noon
Review of past years activities and election of directors
and officers for coming year. Let's have a big turnout!
Speaker – Mayor Paul Jadin.

Tuesday - November 5, 2002. GENERAL ELECTIONS.
Wisconsin Governor, State Officers, U. S. Congress
County Elected Officials and our State Representatives.
Get out and VOTE !

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

*Regular monthly meetings of the Brown County Taxpayers Association
are held the third Thursday of each month at the "Glory Years."*

Cost - \$6.50 per meeting, includes lunch, tax & tip, payable at meeting.
*All BCTA members, their guests and other interested parties are
invited to attend and participate in these open meetings.*
Phone 336-6410 or 499-0768 for information or leave message.



**October,
2002**

"It is dangerous to be right on matters on which the established authorities are wrong." . . . **Voltaire**

"A consultant is a person hired at great expense to tell management what the janitor already knows."
. . . **Doug Larson**

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.**