
◆ The TAX TIMES ◆

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Newsletter of the Brown County Taxpayers Association

July-August, 2003

SO MANY QUESTIONS, SO FEW ANSWERS.

Caught in the political vortex of the State Budget spin cycle, how do Tom & Tammy Taxpayer find out if this load of laundry got clean?

Honestly, where do they find just the facts, ma'am to understand our budget woes and where to fix them? In the battle of the budget wonks' fights over the other side's fuzzy logic fuzzy math replaces the candor of simple analysis.

Accusations of bankrupting the system, damaging the education system and or taking from the elderly hide the kernel of truth, the smidgen of honesty, found in the mere fact, government is outspending itself. The fact is all budgets are cobbled with imaginary numbers. Whose imagination do you trust? I'll be darned if I can gather up more truth than that!

We were taught in school the process of finding truth through logic. Let's ask some questions. Why has government grown so big? Is bigger necessarily better? Wisconsin is a relatively small in population and geographical area. So why do we have so many government agencies with their incumbent regulations and inherent limitations upon the citizenry?

Wisconsin has more law enforcement departments than the State of California. Why? Are people less law-abiding? Are laws more rigorously enforced? I guess government just grew over time when someone in a government agency said; our studies and experts indicate the people are unable to use their own common sense. I once read *The Death of Common Sense* and I am convinced at least of it's morbidity.

Can you remember when news didn't declare a new crisis in government? Why is this? Has government grown so obese it cannot see its toes or put on its own clothes? Has government succumbed to the Peter Principle, raised to the level of incompetence?

My common sense agrees with the last three. I have been fortunate to meet many public servants and in almost every instance each has been a conscientious and hard working individual. The sheer volume of employees suggests we have too many cooks in the kitchen. The complexity of every problem revolves mathematically around the number of solution givers. The most efficient form of government remains the dictatorship. But, for various reasons we have chosen a less efficient and more representative form, the representative democracy which Winston Churchill declared the worst form of governing, except for all the others.

Given our illogical choice to embrace the worst form of governance how do we achieve acceptable objectives of efficiency? Can we obtain services through competitive private companies? These are state and federal quandaries both bureaucracies are beginning to consider. The late start is troubling. Why does it take a crisis to prompt moves to efficiency.

While the common notion is "if it moves tax it", how do we fund government? Let's ask how much land tax-exempt and at what cost? Is 50% enough or should we pay more. How many goods and services can government competitively provide?

Some of these questions are as hard to ask, as they are to answer. Some are political taboo. But the answers need to be sought, in the name of common sense. My common sense tells me a full 40% reduction in government girth, as achieved in the small country of New Zealand, would be a start.

How do we find fiscal responsibility in government? Where in the end can we find a few good common sense answers? Our leaders could look to a timeworn twist on a phrase, ***ask not what you government can do for you, but what can you do for yourself.***

Richard Parins, President

The BROWN COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION - Promoting Fiscal Responsibility In Government.

The High Cost of Health Care. How Bad Can it Get?

We would probably all agree that the costs of medical care and insurance coverage are rising far faster than the rest of the economy and seems to be out of control. It is our observation that government on all levels must accept much of the blame for this problem, largely due from their administration of Medicare and other entitlement programs to permitting the rapidly rising cost of insurance benefits for government employees to be passed on to taxpayers.

The federal government, in its constant efforts to be everything for everybody is the primary culprit, and the problem seems to begin with the Medicare program. Following are a few examples of what seems to be driving up costs that we could identify. There are certainly many more.

- Insuring Medicare recipients cost government far more than is taken in by the relatively small deductions from their Social Security benefits. For 2003, in spite of an 8.7% increase, the cost of Medicare is only \$704.40 per year for each recipient. While most recipients carry supplemental coverage on their own, the cost of benefits furnished by providers also is still far greater than the reimbursement they receive from the government and supplemental insurers.
- In an effort to control these costs, the government uses their own rate tables to reimburse doctors, hospitals and other providers: often at a fraction of what other patients would be charged. While actual costs have been rising, government has gone to the extent of actually reducing their reimbursement each year, causing many providers to refuse or limit their Medicare patients to treatment. They are compelled to accept the governments rate tables for services. Supplemental insurance carried by Medicare recipients only reduces their own liability for deductibles.
- Reduced reimbursements for Medicare patients only causes these providers to charge more for their other patients. This includes those with private insurance or with no insurance coverage at all.
- In the meantime, well-meaning government mandates to insurers and providers keep piling on. Example, effective 1/1/03 Wisconsin insurers must include benefits for diabetes prescription medication.
- This in turn causes the cost of insurance to skyrocket, making it unaffordable for many. It places a huge expense burden on employers trying to provide a decent benefit package for their employees. Insurance costs are reflected in the cost of living because they often rise out of proportion to workers salaries and is passed on to consumers.
- One possible downside of broad insurance coverage is that the insured may take advantage of it to the fullest extent possible, which unfortunately helps to drive up costs.
- The high cost of insurance for government employees,

who often have more comprehensive coverage than the private sector, is one of the fastest rising expenses contributing to the taxes we pay. With insurance costs rising at an average of 12% annually and wages at 3%, the cost of providing insurance could exceed the cost of wages in within ten years.

- Often the entire cost of insuring the uninsured, or absorbing their medical costs is passed on to taxpayers.
- Prescription drug costs are not covered by many insurance plans, and their cost is also becoming an issue requiring massive government assistance.
- The volume of paperwork to providers, insurers, and even the government to track the volume of claims to be processed is a tremendous expense added to the cost of health coverage on all levels.
- It appears that government actually encourages, and has allowed little in the form of legislation to prevent or limit the huge, sometimes unwarranted, lawsuits against doctors, drug manufacturers, insurers, or anyone determined to have deep pockets. This in turn has necessitated that providers carry huge amounts of liability insurance coverage, often costing in excess of their other expenses combined. We also hear of trained and qualified doctors giving up their practices due to lawsuits or the cost of liability insurance. While we realize that legal action is often warranted, huge settlements far exceeding actual damages or pain and suffering are not. Trial lawyers are well organized, and defend their lucrative trade by emotional appeals claiming they only defend us from unscrupulous and unqualified health providers. They openly blame insurance companies for the high cost of health care. Perhaps because the insurance companies protest some of the multi-million dollar verdicts they produce. No matter how you look at this, the cost is passed on to the consumers, including the government and insurers. Trial lawyers as a group are also known to be heavy contributors to political interests who oppose limits on injury verdicts.
- Nonetheless, health care is a huge business, with many of their customers bills automatically covered by insurance with no questions asked. Drug manufacturers, clinics, hospitals and other providers have little incentive to really control costs. Even here in Green Bay, we have seen our hospitals expanding their facilities at considerable expense, plus numerous new clinics and specialty services, passing the cost on to the consumers.

We are sure that everyone reading this can add to the list, or disagree with some of our observations. While it is easy to expect the government to solve the problem, is that what we in the United States really want, or for that matter, need?

The Government tries to help even more.

A classic example of government involvement is the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) which became effective in April of this year. It apparently was originally intended to ensure privacy for individual medical records, and no doubt was well intended with a genuine need.

What started out as popular legislation to give us more privacy as individuals ended up as a 25 page instruction bulletin "promulgated" by the Dept. of Health and Human Services that literally requires legal assistance to interpret. All health care providers must comply with the provisions contained therein, as stiff penalties are provided for non-compliance. You have been asked to sign a waiver from each provider you have visited since April, and the more you visit the more complicated it becomes as you have to authorize specific releases of information to specialists, etc. Maybe this is all a good thing, but it is placing another overhead expense on your local provider, and creating a few more government jobs to pay for. The possibility that information you would want released will be withheld because you didn't understand what you were signing, or that visitors coming to see you at the hospital will be turned away due to misunderstanding. In the meantime, the Social Security Dept. tells every insurance agent in the country when you reach 65 so they can try to sell you Medicare coverage. If you find the HIPAA regulations a nuisance, let your Congressman know.

Another federal program which could very likely do as much harm as good is the prescription drug benefit assistance act which was recently approved by the House of Representatives. It carries a price tag of \$400 Billion over 10 years, which is probably just a Washington guess. The cost of prescription drugs is out of sight, and no one has really given a good reason for being less expensive in Canada. The question is, should government step in and reimburse us for the high price of medical care and prescriptions, or should they examine some of the reasons the cost is so outlandishly high, and perhaps make or allow adjustments to reduce costs.

The BCTA is concerned with this issue, as it greatly affects the taxes we pay as well as providing for our own welfare. Are there ways of reducing medical costs? While we don't have the solution perhaps you do we and will present any suggestions or comments we receive for consideration.

While there is a lot of finger pointing between the government, insurance companies, and health care providers as to the cause of the problem, the solution always seems

"The question is, should government step in and reimburse us for the high price of medical care and prescriptions, or should they examine some of the reasons the cost is so outlandishly high, and perhaps make or allow adjustments to reduce costs."

to be more of the same. More regulation, paperwork, and mandated benefits either from insurance companies or directly from the government itself. My suggestion would be a federal blue-ribbon committee consisting of insurers, private industry employers providing benefits to their employees, a few medical providers bogged down in paperwork, and perhaps an accountant or two who understands costs. Leave the lawyers, politicians, and others getting rich from the leakage in our present system out. They should be able to figure out and implement ways to reduce costs, and benefit all of us. **Jim Frink - BCTA**

Senator Cowles Comments on State Budget and Property Tax Freeze.

"One year ago, I was the author of a proposal to freeze all state spending and to freeze property taxes, but the Assembly Republicans refused to go along with it. That left us with a \$3.2 Billion problem that the Legislature "solved" by using more than \$800 million of one-time tobacco-settlement funds to plug the hole.

This year, I offered more than \$400 million in real, ongoing cuts to government programs that would solve our immediate fiscal mess and would reestablish a firm fiscal footing for future budgets. Again, my proposals were rejected and instead accounting tricks and gimmicks were used. Unfortunately, as a result, our fiscal problems will continue.

I do not oppose the property tax freeze. But as a fiscal conservative I will continue to oppose the one-time funding and accounting tricks to balance the state budget. I will continue to oppose blue smoke and mirrors that only hide our budget problems and simply push the mess on into the future.

I am enclosing a statement further detailing my position on the property tax freeze and truth in budgeting. If you have any further questions regarding the freeze that you wish to discuss with me, be sure to give me a call."

Statement from Senator Cowles:

"As a long-time fiscal conservative who has staked his career on fiscal integrity and honest budgeting, I simply could not vote for this budget. Contrary to the spin being put out by its supporters, the budget is not balanced. It contains a structural deficit of more than \$700 million in spending commitments over base revenues as we begin the next budget cycle.

This budget is not fiscally conservative. In fact, it has more gross spending and employs more state bureaucrats than the budget proposed by the Governor.

Finally, it is not a "no-tax-increase" budget. It is filled with new taxes and tax increased disguised as fees.

I have outlined the following four major reasons I voted against the budget:

#1-It creates an unacceptably high structural deficit.
It will leave a \$714.5 million hole (structural debt) with which to start the 2005-06 fiscal year.

#2-It spends more general tax dollars than the Governor.
It actually spends \$143.7 million more than the Governor.

#3-It employs more state bureaucrats than the Governor.
It calls for 649 more state employees than the Governor requested.

#4-It contains more than \$400 million in new and higher taxes disguised as fees."

There is a total of \$404,343,100 in new fee hikes in the proposed budget for 2003-05. This is not a no-tax increase budget.

Signed, **Robert L. Cowles**, 2d Senate District.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE
www.BCTAxpayers.Org

HOW WISCONSIN BECAME A HIGH-TAX STATE. (aka/Tax Hell)

Have you ever thought about telling you son/daughter that they should move out of our State? A generation ago, the expectation was that you would grow up, go to college and spend the rest of your life working in Wisconsin. But today, the offspring of white-collar workers are graduating from college and increasingly leaving the state. More and more, their parents, once they retire, are following their kids and their grandkids out of state.

An article in the April 2003, "Milwaukee" magazine examines some of the things that have been happening in Wisconsin during recent years, comparing us with other states.

Part of the rationale for the states historic high levels of spending on education has been the economic dividend; it would pay later, when these kids became the state's workers. Increasingly, this investment goes to help other states. One explanation is that Wisconsin's pay levels in every occupation except government work and construction are so far below the national average AND its tax bite is so far above it, which makes financial sense to move elsewhere. In the process, Wisconsin is losing the higher income earners of tomorrow, individuals who could help pay the cost of state and local government.

WISCONSIN'S PROPERTY TAX IS 24% ABOVE THE NATIONAL AVERAGE AND WISCONSIN'S INCOME TAX IS 52% ABOVE THE NATIONAL AVERAGE

At one time, Wisconsin was second only to Pennsylvania to the homing pigeon phenomenon. (Come home to Wisconsin to raise a family). This is no longer a given, a fact that is reflected in the state's abysmal immigration numbers for the college educated.

DID YOU KNOW, Wisconsin residents worked 121 days last year to pay all of their local, state and federal taxes; 43 days just to pay state and local taxes. In comparison they worked 106 days for all of their food, clothing and shelter combined. When you include federal taxes, 33.7 percent of Wisconsin resident's personal income went to pay taxes last year.

During the past three decades, Wisconsin has never gotten out of the top 10 hottest tax hells, according to the Tax Foundation. Since 1993, we have been stuck in second or third place in the rankings. And if your income falls between \$30,000 to \$121,000 your are paying the second-highest taxes in the country, after New York.

What would it take to get the state out of the top 10 worst tax hells. The Wisconsin Department of Revenue calculated that it would have required a \$1.28 billion cut in state and local spending to move to number 11 in 2000 if non-of the other states did nothing.

Meanwhile, other states were improving their lot, driven by a wave of early 1990s tax revolts. Since 1993, 20 states have decreased their general fund spending. Massachusetts, one of the five highest taxing states during the 70's dropped to 39th by cutting costs and instituting measures that limit spending increases. Relying more on strong town govern the state level four legislators face a total of 40 felony counts

ments it eliminated all county government. Other states like South Dakota and Arizona along with Colorado all dropped their state taxes to some of the lowest.

One big reason Wisconsin has lower incomes and wealth is that we are paid less. According to the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance (WTA) in 2000, Wisconsin's per capita income relative to the national average was at its lowest level since 1993.

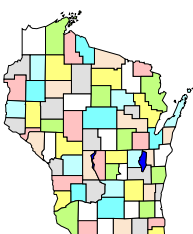
No one knows for sure why pay scales are depressed here, particularly for particularly for higher-level white-collar workers. One theory is taxes and other government spending have been expanding steadily, crowding out worker take-home pay. Another theory is we have fewer corporate headquarters, which usually pay higher wages.

Wisconsinites like to think of themselves as fiscally responsible, and in some ways we are. We have lower mortgage delinquency rates than the national average for example but, since the early 1990's we've been spending like drunken Badgers, stated a state fiscal analyst. Some of the financial commitments we've made are ready to explode. Taxpayers may have been dozing but the bond ratings agency Moody's wasn't. They figured out the state wasn't paying attention to future liabilities and it lowered Wisconsin's bond rating. We've pretty much mortgaged the future. If our state had held spending to the national average in '99 Wisconsin would have saved \$1.8 billion. Instead, the state maxed out the credit cards and squandered a windfall. During the 1990's the state generated \$2.7 billion in unexpected revenue from the stock market and economic boom. But unlike Minnesota and Michigan, which each put away \$1 billion in rainy day funds Wisconsin saved nothing.

Since at least the mid-1990s Wisconsin has had a structural deficit, taking in less than it spends. According to the WTA we are above average in spending in just about every category—and we have a professional full-time legislature. Is it any surprise that all the highest-spending states have full-time legislatures? The last five or six years have been absolutely a case study where the governor and Legislature did everything but come to grips with the budget problem.

Several years of scandal at every level of government have done much to erase the old trust. The Milwaukee County pension plane, the Milwaukee Public Schools pension and benefit debacle, an elected Milwaukee official paying \$375,000 out of campaign funds to settle a sexual harassment claim, at the state level four legislators face a total of 40 felony counts for extortion and misuse of funds. Is it any wonder we have a Leg-

islature that can't balance the budget without stealing from one pocket to bail out another? Over the past 15 years, state polls have consistently shown taxes to be the top issue concerning citizens.



But, Wisconsinites believed they had a clean, dependable government. Clearly, that's not true anymore. We had an enormous growth of lobbying, a crop of PR people and lobbyists who changed the body politic and made it subservient to special interests.

Other states have tried drastic measures to rein in spending: term limits, limiting spending increases to population growth plus inflation, supermajority votes of both legislative houses before a tax increase. The one good thing is that a lot of other states are facing deficits, and if they raise taxes to cope with them and we can somehow get by without doing it, we can actually improve our position on the tax burden ratings. Maybe another way to get officials to be less friendly to special-interest spending is to tie their salaries either to the size of government or to the rate of economic growth or both – that is, put them in the same boat as taxpayers.

“If you look at the spending per person in this state, it's out of control, it is fiscal insanity” Says Paul Purcell, president and CEO of Robert W. Baird and Co. “These university people and government employees are part of the problem. And if these people don't get it, people will just keep leaving the state. The data is irrefutable.

Barb Wescott – BCTA

ernment, the government should not support the people.:

. . . **Grover Cleveland**

“Blessed are the young, for they shall inherit the national debt.”

. . . **Herbert Hoover**

Representative Lasee Comments on Budget Proposals.

The spin coming out of the Governor's office is clear: the budget, which the Legislature passed this week, will make unconscionable cuts to public education.

Governor Doyle says those cuts add up to \$400 million. In a separate interview, Secretary of Administration Marc Marotta went even further. He said the "cuts" will add up to \$7 billion from public schools over the next 10 years.

That's the spin. Here are the facts. Over the course of the current two-year budget period, fiscal years 2002 and 2003, the state will spend a total of \$10.34 billion on K-12 education – more than 40% of the entire state budget. That includes both general and categorical aids, the school levy tax credit, and state residential school aids.

Governor Doyle's budget over the next two years spends \$10.53 billion on public K-12 education. The Legislature's budget spends \$10.62 billion.

The Legislature's budget spends \$90 million more on public education than the Governor's budget, and \$280 million more than we're spending now. But the Governor claims we're "cutting" education spending.

What the Governor actually means is this: by freezing property taxes, schools won't be able to raise taxes by \$400 million over the next two years, or by \$7 billion over the next 10 years.

That's real government-speak: assume spending will rise by a certain amount. If someone proposes spending less than that amount, call it a cut, even if you'll still be spending more.

Governor Doyle is assuming that, without the tax freeze, school districts will raise taxes by \$400 over the next two years, and by \$7 billion over the next 10 years.

But the Governor promised no tax increases. Earlier this year, he publicly asked local governments not to raise taxes. Now, he's just assuming they will. (note: local governments and schools can still raise taxes, if their citizens agree to it in a referendum - I believe this is how it should be).

Rep Frank G. Lasee

“Though the people support the gov-

Allouez Village Hall on Fast Track.

No one really denies the present Allouez Village Hall and Public Works Facility have deficiencies warranting replacement. The question is location and how much the population is willing to increase their property tax bills.

Perhaps the Village Board misinterpreted a petition presented at their June meeting objecting to the purchase of a site that would be outrageously expensive and would cost even more in lost property tax revenues after private development. **The real message to the board was: Proceed with plans at a reasonable cost, either on existing village property or something more reasonable. Be more receptive to your constituents.**

While the public offered other alternatives and opinions at the July Village Board meeting, the Board seems to be in a hurry to proceed on their own. Legal action to obtain the expensive property has not been ruled out, and consultants and architects are being retained. Village President McCain stated at the June meeting, “Don't worry, we don't want a Taj Mahol.” Architects and consultants often convince elected officials otherwise, with taxpayer cost not the first priority. Citizens already face sizable property tax increases due to the state budget. The Village should develop a reasonable, affordable plan and seek taxpayer approval.

Jim Frink

Rep. Gard Announces Property Tax Freeze Website.

A new interactive website, www.Taxfreeze.org, allows you to register your support for a freeze on property tax increases, and remind the governor of his pledge not to raise taxes to balance the state budget.

“There is not a man in this country who can't make a living for himself and family. But he can't make a living for them and the government too, the way his government is living. What the government has got to do is live as cheap as the people.”

. . . **Will Rogers**

THINGS THAT MAKE US WONDER.

Brown County had claimed it could collect about \$400,000 annually in parking revenue from the empty lot, AKA/Ray Nitschke Field leased to the Packers. The Packers agreement to a new lease should be a good deal for all concerned. In the past, Arena parking receipts have never really been open to public discussion.

The state budget debates between the governor and legislature have been entertaining, but the results will probably be tragic. Any cutbacks in government services or employees will likely be made even more noticeable by protests, and increases in fees or taxes will not sit well with taxpayers and only enhance Wisconsin's reputation as a high tax state and a poor place to do business. Considering that the budget shortfall was created more by an increase in spending demands than a shortage of funds reinforces the need to hold spending to previous years levels more than allocating available funds to special interests. (Especially those being rewarded for election campaign contributions.)

Regardless of how you perceive Hillary and her new book, you have to credit her public relations people for all of the free publicity received. Same for Harry Potter. The power of the press in action.

The fact that people quickly take advantage of government programs has been proven in Green Bay when it was disclosed that groups of 25 or more children under the age of 5 were riding for free on our city buses as long as they were accompanied by an adult. The buses may be federally subsidized, but we are still all paying for them.

Most communities have large amounts of real estate that is exempt from property taxes due to their exempt status. These exemptions probably go back to the days when property taxes were first imposed as a method of paying local expenses, and when tax rates were minimal and not as much of a factor in personal or

commercial expenses as they are today. Times have changed in the last 100 years, and dependence on property taxes has increased dramatically. We certainly are not proposing taxing churches or legitimate charitable organizations, but there certainly must a lot of entities taking advantage of the laws and placing their tax burden on the rest of us. Some organizations pay a fee in lieu of taxes to cover police, fire and other municipal services and this is something that could possibly be considered in more cases.

We commend Sheriff Kocken for his plan to phase out the Brown County Huber Facility, which he claims could save taxpayers about \$2 million per year. What puzzles us is it seems just a couple of years ago, when the tremendous cost of building and staffing the new jail was being considered, no one had much interest in any such plans to save taxpayer money.

Wisconsin Public Service has agreed to purchase 60 acres of shoreline landfill property near the mouth of the Fox River, including 20 acres that are under water. This is for possible future expansion. It has even been suggested that the "unsightly" coal in downtown Green Bay could be moved to this site where they could greet people entering our harbor. How did this one slip by the DNR?

At this time, the fate of the state budget is in Governor Doyle's hands. He has proven quite adept at rewarding his friends and political supporters, and somehow made the legislature appear rather useless.

Don't worry if increased property taxes are a result. By the end of the year when we get our property tax bills many of us will have forgotten what is going on now. We are sure the governor is aware of this.

The thought of holding state spending increases to the rate of inflation has been proposed for the State of Wisconsin, and hopefully the idea is not dead. The question of whether it would work here could be answered in

Colorado. In 1992 voters approved a referendum holding state spending increases to the rate of inflation plus property growth. Their governor has blocked any attempts by special interest spenders to circumvent these restrictions by budgeting "gimmicks". Today, Colorado is one of the few states not facing a major budget crisis.

Both the city and state of New York recently increased their cigarette taxes to \$1.50 per pack, making a pack of cigarettes cost over \$7.00 in New York City. The results so far haven't indicated a decrease in smoking or an increase in tax revenues. Smokers are going to other states, the internet, Indian casinos, and other black market sources to feed their habit. Local retailers who sell cigarettes are complaining about the loss of revenue.

Are all of the unused parking meters in downtown Green Bay and the Broadway district the result of nobody going there, or is nobody going there because of the parking meters?

A recent article in "Forbes" magazine regarding the increase in the number of gambling casinos in all of the states reported that, "A slot machine can easily bring in \$100,000 to \$200,000 in gross winnings." The article indicates that states are making deals to keep 40 to 50% of these winnings. How many slot machines do we have here in Wisconsin?

If Wisconsin's economy gets back on track, and the state is someday able to balance its budget like it should, do you suppose all of the fee increases that are presently being imposed will be rescinded?

While the legislature debates lowering the blood alcohol count so we immediately get \$3 million more federal highway dollars, the USDA is considering fining Wisconsin \$3.5 million for mistakes in administering the federal food stamp program during 2002. Regardless of ones convictions of lowering the BAC, we would believe it should be debated more on its own merits rather than be subject to federal blackmail

Most of the criticism of the recent federal tax cuts come from those, or claiming to represent those who already pay little or no income tax. Who will pay the bill when taxes must be raised to pay for a national emergency.

Congress is in the process of approving a prescription drug benefit program, with a ten year price tag estimated to be over \$400 Billion. Based on the 2000 population of 281 million, this equates to \$1,423 for each U. S. Citizen. The plan isn't supposed to be effective for a couple of years, which apparently will give them time to figure out how to pay for it. Congressman Green supports the plan so maybe he has some ideas.

It was mentioned by one of our area representatives that during the recent budget debates in Madison, for every suggestion for a cut in spending, there would be several amendments to restore previously approved budget cuts or proposals for new spending programs.

Remember just a few years ago when passing the state budget was a routine matter for the legislature and governor? Unfortunately money was not so much as a problem, and spending programs and policy changes were often inserted into the budget at the last minute so that the legislature could go home for the summer. That is probably one of the reasons Wisconsin taxes are now so high and we have so many laws and regulations to live with. The governor was given the line item veto power to correct some of these last minute insertions, but apparently now he can change the whole budget if he so desires.

If congress keeps proposing programs to help low income citizens pay their medical bills, educate their children, and maintain their standard of living, they might just as well come up with a plan for the government to pay taxes for the rest of us.

Just wondering.

JF

National Debt Clock Update.

As of about 9:30 A.M., July 1, 2003, the national debt clock showed a balance due of \$6,606,712,210,175.00. That's 6.6 Trillion, or 6,600 Billion, or an increase of \$57.5 Billion during the past month. Each family in the U.S. would owe \$105,218 if the govt. decides to pay this off tomorrow.

No TAX TIMES in August.

We are not planning on publishing a Tax Times for the month of August, but will be back in September. There will be a regular BCTA meeting on Thursday, August 21, and we will plan on scheduling an interesting speaker. Also, monthly meetings are scheduled for July 17, and Sept. 18, so mark your calendars. Please call Jim Frink at 336-6410 if any question.

Realtors Association President to Speak at July Meeting.

Pat Kaster, President of the Realtors Association of NEWisconsin, and Jennifer Sunstrom, their Govt. Affairs Director will address the July BCTA meeting scheduled for Thurs. July 17, at the Glory Years.

We have asked them to comment on the effects of property taxes on home ownership. Details on the back page of this *TAX TIMES*.

"The government is like a baby's alimentary canal, with a happy appetite at one end and no responsibility at the other."

. . . Ronald Reagan

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, Box 684, Green Bay, WI 54305-0684, or call Jim Frink at 336-6410.

E-Mail Frink@ExecPC.Com.

June Meeting Notes.

Property Tax Freeze?

Monthly BCTA meeting held Thursday, June 18, at the Glory Years.

The meeting began with a lengthy discussion in reaction to news that the State Senate had voted in favor of a property tax freeze in Wisconsin. A number of concerns were voiced that many local government units seem to be hunting for loopholes and planning end runs to keep spending as usual.

One member remembered that New Zealand reduced its government by 40 percent about a decade ago and seems to be getting along well with much less government.

Former California residents shared their experiences with Proposition 13. While it created many inequities over time, they agreed that Proposition 13 was very effective at protecting elderly citizens who wanted to remain in their homes.

Other concerns about the state budget included the proposal to shift funds from DNR license increases to other DNR purposes, the cost of state mandated programs for local units of government, and the amount of property in Wisconsin not subject to property taxes.

The Water Study Task Force reported that the Brown County Central Water Authority (BCCWA) has rejected making pipeline payments to the City of Green Bay. They question the validity of the \$135 million cost estimate for the pipeline. The BCCWA is evaluating its options, which will likely include interim water purchases from the City. With ASR working, a smaller pipeline will be needed. Without ASR, the capital contribution issue must be resolved or a separate pipeline will be required by the BCCWA. One benefit of all the discussion is that more citizens are becoming educated on water issues.

The *TAX TIMES* would like to print some members' opinions about the Allouez Town Hall situation.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, July 17, at the Glory Years. Details on back page of this *TAX TIMES*.

Dave Nelson, Secretary

The TAX TIMES

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Representative Lasee on the State Budget.
Allouez Village Hall on The Fast Track.
Website to register support for Property Tax Freeze.
Things That Make Us Wonder.
and more.

The TAX TIMES - July-August, 2003

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

Thursday - July 17, 2003. BCTA Monthly Meeting.

GLORY YEARS. 12:00 Noon.

Pat Kaster, President of Northeastern Wisconsin Realtors Assn., and Jennifer Suntstrom, Govt. Affairs Director.

“Property taxes and home ownership.”

Thursday - August 21, 2003. BCTA Monthly Meeting.

GLORY YEARS. 12:00 Noon.

Program/speaker to be announced.

Thursday - September 18, 2003. BCTA Monthly Meeting.

GLORY YEARS. 12:00 Noon.

Program/speaker to be announced.

BCTA Monthly meetings are held the third Thursday of each month at the GLORY YEARS, 347 S. Washington St., Green Bay.

cost - \$6.50 per meeting – Includes tax & tip. Payable at meeting.

All members of the BCTA, Their guests, and other interested parties are cordially invited to attend and participate in these open meetings.

Call Jim Frink, 336-6410 for information or to leave message.



**July -
August
2003**

“If you think health care is expensive now, wait until you see what it costs when its free.”

. . . P. J O'Rourke

“Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it everywhere, diagnosing it incorrectly, and applying the wrong remedies.”

. . . Groucho Marx

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.**