
◆ The TAX TIMES ◆

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Newsletter of the Brown County Taxpayers Association

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Dearth of the Principled.

When I was very young and even now I love the old black & white historical movie dramas where the men and women who shaped this nation, often played by a Gary Cooper or Olivia de Havilland, were individuals who gave your heart a feeling of trust and genuineness we yearn for. They were leaders, of nations and families.

My dictionary defines leader as somebody who guides or directs others by showing them or telling them a way in which to behave.

In my mind that definition lacks something. It seems ok, if you are open to the to the idea of bad or poor leaders, like the drug busted, sex abuser sports figure or celebrity, or the politician who shakes down lobbyists for campaign donation.

Leader is a strictly positive word. There should be no room in our lexicon for: bad leader. A leader is a person of principle who guides and directs people through an ethical, rational value system.

What do we suppose if John Adams, Patrick Henry or Ben Franklin dropped in to observe their handiwork? If they asked the question, which are your leaders, where would you direct them? Will that list be a short one?

With so many mixed messages, say one thing then do the opposite, I'm not sure whom I might point out as a leader. The ones showing some principal call a budget poor when it is, call spending the problem when it is, and call for institutional reform when it is sorely needed. Those who follow just the polling data for answers are not the leaders. Otherwise, they are just shadowing the shifting sands, fingering fickle political winds.

It's a tight rope for sure. But when I follow the rope from the acrobat to the anchor, and all I see is re-election, I want the price of admission to this circus returned to me.

We must ask more basic questions and demand direct to-the-point answers. What is your goal, your plan and how will you achieve them? Lead or answer at the polls. Do you just like governing or do you intend to lead? Will you chart new territory, explore new potential solutions? That's what leaders do. If we are to continue just going around the beltway following our current trail then who needs a leader? It must also be said, we must be willing followers, actively engaged, supporting difficult solutions. We cannot let someone else's courage and conviction substitute for our own. When we truly lead our own lives, we will surely choose better leaders.

The BROWN COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION
Promoting Fiscal Responsibility in Government

Problems in California Not All Necessarily The Fault Of The Economy.

While Wisconsin's \$3.2 billion budget deficit is causing all units of government to tighten their belts and rethink their priorities, the state of California has a \$44 billion problem. Many other states are having major problems, and in most cases the blame is falling on the economy in general.

In California, however, much of the blame seems to lie directly on the anti-business policies of Governor Gray Davis and his administration. An article in the August 11, *Fortune*, magazine, which is usually accurate in their stories, gives us "the rest of the story."

They report that recall efforts against Gov. Davis since his 2002 reelection have eroded much of his traditional funding support, forcing him to rely more on labor unions for financing. This has compelled him and the legislature to embrace the unions political agenda in return.

The result, a payback of a half dozen or so new laws imposing burdensome and expensive regulations on business. Three of the new laws were singled out as being particularly damaging to the economy.

First – California recently approved the countries only *paid* family leave act. Starting in 2004, employees will be allowed to request six weeks leave *every year*, which can be taken days at a time to care for a new baby, a sick relative, or other medical problems including migraine headaches as determined by a state agency. Employers would have no say in what qualifies, but workers would be eligible for up to 55% of their salaries *tax-free* which would initially be financed by a small payroll tax backed by a state fund.

Recall that a national family leave act was one of the first initiatives of the Clinton administration, but so far employees taking advantage of it would not normally be compensated. California is the first state to make paid leave mandatory.

Second – The California legislature mandated huge increases in workman's compensation benefits. Business-

men there must contribute the highest premiums to cover this of any state, \$5.85 per \$100 of employee wages vs. a national average of about \$2.50. Benefits for unemployed were raised 71% from \$490 per week in 2002 to \$840 in 2005. Unemployment insurance is especially costly for small business's and seasonal employers.

Third – California again made their own enhancements to existing federal laws, this time to those that require that workers who work over 40 hours per week be paid overtime. California employers are now mandated to pay overtime for employees who work over 8 hours per day. This is different than 40 hours per week. This poses a tremendous expense on companies with employees who have chosen to work 4-10 hour days, or who have flexible schedules, often at their own options and advantage.

While these new laws may be popular with workers, and buy some support for Gov. Davis and his base of support, there has been a side effect.

The *Fortune* article states that California has lost 289,000 manufacturing jobs since 2001. These apparently are not from plant closings due to the economy but from industry and other employers moving their operations to other states with a more favorable climate for business. The only employers unlikely to move are those that have direct contact with their customers in California.

The *TAX FOUNDATION* has ranked California 49th nationally for their business climate with the comment that "statistically speaking, every aspect of California's tax system is antagonistic to business development and economic growth."

Is the same thing happening in Wisconsin? Numerous studies have concluded that high taxes and excess regulations are more of a detriment to attracting and retaining business than quality of life factors are in keeping them. Without business, there is no economy. As far as California goes, they have what they voted for. Good luck Arnold.

Jim Frink – BCTA

The Tax Freeze Fight Continues.

By Rep. John Gard.

The property tax freeze is about taking a stand. The Republicans in the legislature chose to stand with the taxpayers. Governor Doyle chose to stand with the special interests. His veto of the property tax freeze could amount to a billion dollar property tax hike.

Despite the one vote setback in the senate, this issue is not going to go away. Thanks to thousands of individuals, state taxpayer groups, members of the media and others the freeze turned into a statewide grassroots movement the likes of which Wisconsin has not seen in years. We hope to bring Wisconsin taxes in line with our families ability to pay. It is my hope that, as lawmakers continue to hear from their constituents around the state, we will generate support sufficient to overcome the governor's obstructionism. If we are unable to overcome this, we will consider going around them, amending Wisconsin's Constitution and letting the voters themselves have the final say on this issue.

Rep. John Gard, Speaker of the Assembly.

A Call To Action.

The Brown County budget for the year 2004 is now being prepared. Reductions in state shared revenues are making it necessary to cut projected projects and services. New spending incentives are being put on hold. It is the desire of the Brown County Board to prepare a budget without resorting to any property tax increases.

Contact your county supervisor and express your support. The only way to hold down taxes is to hold down spending. If you have any suggestions or ideas on how to cut expenses, let him or her know! The same for your local municipalities and school districts. Don't be afraid to attend meetings and speak up. Tell your elected officials that taxes are high enough already.

"I wish that party battles could be fought with less personal passion for the common good. I am not interested in fighting persons. . . but in fighting things." **Woodrow Wilson**

Thoughts On 4-Year-Old Kindergartens.

One of the items originally cut by the Wisconsin Legislature in their attempts to reduce the state budget deficit was a \$46 million amount to reduce funding for 4-year kindergartens from 50% to 25%. The intent was that local communities would have to pay the difference to maintain this program. This was also one of the items returned to the budget by Governor Doyle.

According to the state Dept. of Public Instruction, about 174 of Wisconsin's 526 school districts offer some form of 4-year old kindergartens. This is also referred to as "Early Learning Initiative." It has been under consideration by the Green Bay school district, but implementation has been delayed due to the projected cost and uncertainty of state aids.

So far, this has been a controversial subject. Opponents have called it a state supported baby sitting service, and point to the cost to taxpayers of new buildings, teachers and support staff. The value of the program as an educational tool to such young children has been questioned. Proponents make claims that reinforce benefits of the program, and as a preparation for future learning.

In addition to existing 4-year kindergartens, many children now attend private pre-schools before kindergarten at their own expense. Whether these experience are helpful has been evaluated with mixed results.

While supported by the teachers and their unions, full implementation would still necessitate additional classroom facilities, etc.

No doubt we will be hearing a lot more on this subject in the months and years to come. Any benefits will have to be well presented, and taxpayers will have to be convinced that it is worth the expense.

"Well it time to get over it. Quit harping about non-issues like political appointments and get on with the real business at hand: cutting taxes." . . . Green Bay Press-Gazette

Designed To Fail. Cost overruns part of government projects.

We are used to the spectacle of corporate executives being led off in handcuffs for failure to present proper financial statements or other misrepresentations. But have you noticed how rare it is to see government officials being led off in handcuffs for similar failures in financial management, even though their actions affect far more people—every taxpayer—and do more aggregate economic damage than the corporate wrongdoers?

If you own stock in a company, and if management fails to accomplish its business plan even for very legitimate reasons, you can sell the stock or replace the directors. Executives and other employees in corporate America are accustomed to job dismissals, even when the reasons for poor performance were out of their control.

Now contrast this with government. Every day one can find articles in the newspapers about government mismanagement. Despite claims from self-righteous politicians that they are going to "clean the mess up and make sure that it does not happen again." It always happens again.

Congress is now considering a "prescription drug benefit" to Medicare recipients. One plan they are contemplating is said to cost \$300 billion. How reliable do you think that number is? In 1987, we were told Medicaid's new hospitals subsidy would cost \$100 million in 1992. The actual cost turned out to be more than \$11 billion, or more than 110 times what was projected. In 1988, we were told Medicare's home-care program would cost \$4 billion in 1993, but the actual cost was \$10 billion, or 2 1/2 times projections. When Medicare started in 1965, we were told toe hospitalization insurance part would cost \$9 billion in 1990. The actual cost was \$66 billion.

These cost overruns took thousands of dollars from every taxpayers pocket, but no one went to jail or was fired. Now the same politicians and bureaucrats who gave us the original fraudulent numbers are at it again. They get away with it because people have

short memories and too few in the news business are willing to remind the public of the previous faulty projections and misstatements.

We, as a nation, have been building roads and bridges for a long time, so there is considerable knowledge about what things cost. But look what happens to government-sponsored highway projects. Boston's Central Artery Project was supposed to cost \$3.2 billion but is now expected to cost \$14.6 billion. Thousands of similar examples can be found for almost every government activity. Remember, when politicians are selling us on some new pet scheme, they argue the benefits from the program will exceed the costs, but when there are massive cost overruns the costs most often exceed the benefits, making us all worse off.

The system does not work because politicians have a vested interest in underestimating the costs of their favorite schemes and because government managers are rarely fired or otherwise penalized for misspending the taxpayers money.

What is to be done? After the recent corporate scandals, the SEC started requiring corporate CEOs and chief financial officers to personally sign and attest to the accuracy of financial statements under penalty of fine or jail. This program should be extended to government officials. In addition, Congress should put a freeze on the budget for any government agency that fails to provide proper financial and program audits.

From the "Washington Times."

"I've got a surprise for the pundits: I kept my word. Today I am signing a budget that restores fiscal responsibility and does not raise taxes, as I promised." . . . Gov. James Doyle

"If you always tell the truth, you never have to remember what you said." . . . Bobby Knight

"In a free and republican government, you cannot retrain the voice of the multitude." . . . George Washington

Should Political Campaigns Be Publicly Financed?

Whenever the subject of campaign finance reform comes up, it is suggested that they be paid from public funding, such as the income tax check-off program. In 2001, only 9.1% of Wisconsin taxpayers opted to this donation., with the average contribution being \$1.41. They couldn't even finance a single legislators campaign at that rate.

Wisconsin 49th Nationally in Federal Spending.

A recent article from the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance claims federal spending in Wisconsin totaled \$5,301 per person in 2002. Menomonee county received the most per capita, \$10,861, and Calumet county the least, \$2,405. We assume that Social Security payment were part of this total, and the reason for Wisconsin's poor ranking was the lack of military bases and other federal facilities.

Federal Debt update.

As of 8:00 P.M. Tuesday, Sept. 2, 2003, the Federal Debt was **\$6,793,932,506.49**. This is an increase of about \$187 Billion, more or less since we last reported on July 2. It relates to a debt of \$108,199.00 per U. S. Family, rich or poor.

Although the source claims to be accurate and have factored in all variables, there are claims the debt could be as high as \$44 Trillion after allowing for Social Security and government pension liabilities. The Iraq war and senior drug benefits plan could also raise question marks. Maybe some of the candidates lining up for the presidential nomination have answers.

How Much Is A Billion?

- A billion seconds ago it was 1959.
- A billion minutes ago, Jesus was alive.
- A billion hours ago our ancestors were living in the stone age.
- A billion dollars ago was only 8 hours and 20 minutes at the rate Washington spends it.

"It's so cold here in Washington, D.C., that the politicians have their hands in their own pockets." . . . **Bob Hope**

"There are two things which will always be difficult for a democratic nation: to start a war and to end it."
. . . **Alexis De Tocqueville**

"I am a politician because of the conflict between good and bad, and in the end good will triumph." . . . **Margaret Thatcher**

"The word 'politics' is derived the word 'poly', meaning many, and the words 'ticks', meaning blood sucking parasites,"
. . . **Larry Hardiman**

Wisconsin Needs Permanent Tax Relief.

Where do we go from here? The property tax freeze, as it was written into the budget, is gone forever now. Gone, but not forgotten: the Assembly passed a new version, including minor adjustments to better accommodate new growth. I expect the bill to pass the Senate, but then it will be up to Governor Doyle, who has said he will likely veto it.

Even if Governor Doyle signs it, or a veto override succeeds, the debate won't be over. Remember, the property tax freeze is only temporary: it has a three-year time limit.

So what happens when those three years are UP? Taxing isn't really the problem. Government spending is the problem. Why does government spending grow so fast? Because it's easier for elected officials to say yes than to say no.

Once the economy is fully recovered, spending in Wisconsin will begin to rise again, just like the pre-deficit era. When the economy expands, revenues grow without any change in the tax rate. The incentive to keep spending down disappears.

Now is the perfect time to enact permanent, unavoidable limits on the growth of government spending. I've already had discussions with several other legislators about the various plans for keeping spending down, and I believe the best approach is one modeled after a Colorado law, passed in 1992. Presently, Colorado is one of the few states not having a fiscal crisis.

This is the Taxpayer Bill of Rights, about which I've written several times before, but with a few changes. Under TABOR, the state government and local school districts will be allowed to increase spending each year by the rate of inflation plus population (student body, for schools) growth.

Counties and municipalities will have a different formula: in order to encourage economic development, we'll limit those governments to inflation plus growth in tax base, due to new construction.

There are other aspects to TABOR: require a referendum in order to raise the rates of the income, sales, franchise or property taxes; create a budget stabilization fund and an emergency fund; automatically send surpluses back to the taxpayers, in rebate checks or tax cuts.

TABOR is a constitutional amendment. This is the most important thing about it. Once a constitutional amendment is enacted, the state government can't ignore it: this is a huge weakness in the property tax freeze: it's only a statute, so the legislature can change it at any time, or ignore it at will.

Not so with a constitutional amendment. Enact TABOR, and we will have the long-term, permanent tax reform this state needs.

On the next page is an outline of the features of the proposed TABOR amendment. You can contact my office for the complete text of this legislation. With taxpayer support we believe this can become a reality.

Rep. Frank G. Lasee

VISIT OUR WEBSITE
www.BCTaxpayers.Org

THE TAXPAYER'S BILL OF RIGHTS (*TABOR*)

- ◆ Limit spending growth for the state and schools to growth in population plus growth in inflation.
- ◆ Limit counties and municipalities to inflation plus new growth.
- ◆ Let the taxpayers vote in referendum to raise the rates of the income, sales, franchise, or property taxes.
- ◆ Let the taxpayers vote on whether or not the government can borrow money.
- ◆ Require an emergency fund and a budget stabilization fund.
- ◆ Automatically send surpluses back to the taxpayers.

WHY DO WE NEED IT?

- Wisconsin's GPR spending grew at nearly twice the rate of population plus inflation (CPI) between 1992 and 2002.
- In a world where special interests can manipulate government into spending more and more money, we need spending caps to hold taxes down.
- If **TABOR** had been in effect since 1992, Wisconsin taxpayers would have saved more than \$1.5 billion last year alone. That's a one-year savings of \$276 for every man, woman, and child in the state. Imagine the investment that could be done with that money. Imagine the spending power that would mean for a family.

REFERENDUM CONTROLS

- Governments can only raise tax rates if the voters agree to it through a referendum. Those referenda can only be held on specific dates – regular election dates. Spending proponents will not be able to sneak in a referendum at an unusual time, when they can count on voter turnout to be low.

THE RAINY DAY FUND

- Governments will be required to create an emergency fund equal to 3% of their annual expenditures, and a budget stabilization fund equal to 4% to 15% of annual expenditures. A two-thirds majority vote will be required before the budget stabilization fund can be used, and it must be replenished at a rate of 1% per year.

EMERGENCY SPENDING

- Spending limits may be exceeded in case of emergency. **TABOR** requires a two-thirds majority vote in each house of the Legislature (or the school board, county board, etc.) to declare an emergency, then a two-thirds majority in each house on the specific tax hike.
- Emergency spending can only be approved once the rainy day fund is exhausted, and unused funds must be refunded if not used within 180 days.

EASE RESTRICTIONS ON SCHOOLS

- Under **TABOR**, school districts will never face declining funding again. Instead of facing declining revenues when enrollment declines, school districts will still be able to raise their expenditures by the same rate as inflation.

JULY MEETING MINUTES.

Monthly meeting July 17, at the Glory Years. Minutes of the June meeting and treasurer's report were approved.

Pat Kaster, president of the Realtors Association of Northeastern Wisconsin and owner/developer of River City Realtors, spoke about the impacts of high taxes and other costs imposed by government upon our Wisconsin economy. She explained that high taxes and permit fees have placed our local paper mills in a situation where it is becoming cheaper to relocate production to states with better economic incentives than offered by Wisconsin.

For Brown County citizens, the supply of affordable housing is diminished by high taxes. While building fees and impact fees are alternatives to property taxes, but they are ultimately paid by home buyers. Developers pay for water, sewers, and streets. Governments believe they are charging developers, but homeowners really pay the costs. For municipalities, the property tax levy freeze could be mitigated by development and it could be changed by referendum. Members commented that there is indeed a high demand for affordable housing with lower taxes, and that citizens must stop funding government to stop government spending.

The Water Study Task Force reported that, at the last minute, Green Bay has a new plan. The parties want (or need) to reach an agreement by September. The Brown County Central Water Authority (BCCWA) chairman has stated that the BCCWA is not regulated by the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSCW). This leads to an interesting situation as the Green Bay Water Utility and the member municipalities of the BCCWA are regulated by the PSCW. With the BCCWA buying water from the Green Bay Water Utility and reselling it to the municipalities, there would be an unregulated middleman that could impose costs the municipalities might not be able to recover in their regulated rates. In the discussion following, it was agreed that the BCTA should begin investigating the process required to create a metropolitan water district for Green Bay and the surrounding communities.

Brown County Supervisor John Gower reported that, as a result of the Blue Ribbon Task Force's report, the Brown County Board voted to stop construction of the proposed \$32 million Mental Health Center. The task force report documented that all three licenses of the existing Mental Health Center are losing money and that recent legislation requires decentralized treatment in the future. He also commented that economies in the Brown County Surveyor's Office are being investigated.

The next BCTA meeting is scheduled for August 21.
Dave Nelson – Secretary

AUGUST MEETING MINUTES.

Monthly meeting August 21, at the Glory Years. July minutes and treasurer's report were approved.

Brown County Executive Carol Kelso reviewed recent developments in the county budget process for 2004. Dealing with a projected \$5 million shortfall, all but one department has come up with budget cuts as requested.

The Blue Ribbon Task force presented its recommendation to Carol Kelso, who then brought those findings to the Brown County Board at the July 2003 meeting. After the review, the County Board voted 24-2 not to build the \$32 million Mental Health Center.

The current facility has 3 state licenses, Psychiatric, Nursing Home, and Developmental Disabled. About 10 percent of the Nursing Home & Developmentally Disabled patients are from out-of-county, while almost 50 percent of the Psychiatric patients are from out-of-county. Brown County is subsidizing a portion of the cost for out-of-county patients.

Many of the current patients will be placed in community based residential facilities (CBRF) by 2005 according to new state and federal regulations.

The Brown County Board has approved a full audit of the Human Services Department and its \$88 million budget.

Six county board committees oversee the 32 Brown County departments. These six committees will be reviewing the proposed department budgets and are looking for citizens' ideas for savings. Share your ideas with your Brown County supervisor.

President Richard Parins reported that the rally to support the property tax freeze on Saturday, August 9, was very successful with about 100 citizens and several state legislators present.

State Representative Karl Van Roy discussed the Assembly's attempt to freeze Wisconsin property taxes, noting that it is necessary to keep property tax awareness in front of Wisconsin citizens.

The Water Supply Study Task Force reported that the Brown County Central Water Authority is still hopeful of reaching an agreement with the City of Green Bay. The numbers have changed, with Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) now becoming the most expensive option. The ASR test results at the Military Avenue well are improving, but are still not acceptable.

The next BCTA meeting will be September 18, at the Glory Years.
Dave Nelson – Secretary

BCTA Dues Renewals Appreciated.

Annual dues renewals for the Brown County Taxpayers Association are sent on a cyclical basis, annually from when you first became a member. This balances are cash flow and work load. Please appreciate it is time consuming and expensive to send second reminders. If you have any questions regarding your membership status, call the BCTA Treasurer, Jim Frink at 336-6410. Thank you.

“Politics is not the art of the impossible. It consists of choosing between the disastrous and the unpalatable.”

. . . **John Kenneth Golbrath**

“Politics is not a bad profession. If you succeed, there are many rewards. If you disgrace yourself, you can always write a book.”

. . . **Ronald Reagan**

THINGS THAT MAKE US WONDER.

In order to apply, or advance in the civil service system, you must meet a long list of criteria including education, experience, diversification and numerous intangibles. The person who is in complete charge of the entire department, however, is often an appointee (political) at the discretion of the governor or president, and who often possesses no relative experience with the specific department or business ability whatsoever. Then we wonder why government can't do things right.

In the late 1800's. this practice of appointing individuals to public office as a reward for loyalty to the party in power became known as the "spoils system", and a symbol of political corruption. We still see it to this day here in Wisconsin but call it what you want.

We have always trusted the quality and safety of our potable water supply. Stricter standards regarding certain hazards which would be expensive to control are constantly being imposed. In the meantime, Green Bay and the surrounding communities can't quite agree on a plan for a metropolitan water supply to serve everyone. One that would serve the best interests of all concerned. Let's hope that Lake Michigan pollution which is closing swimming beaches due to pollution doesn't cause us more problems by the time a plan is reached.

~~Our priorities must be twisted~~ when our expensive 911 system fails to properly notify the proper public safety employees of emergencies, but we can find out within a few minutes of a powerball drawing if a winning number was picked, and the exact location where it was sold.

~~The Packers plan to sell exhibition game tickets from the 4,000 new seats they set aside to award Brown County residents for supporting the .5% sales tax apparently didn't meet the anticipated initial enthusiasm.~~ The idea of making single game tickets available gives those who wouldn't otherwise attend games an opportunity for the Lam-

beau experience. On the other hand, each of those seats represents a loss of \$2,000 in seat license fees that those with season tickets were compelled to pay, and what could have raised another \$8 million to offset the construction debt – like when you buy a Packer license plate. It also meant that 4,000 fans who have been on the waiting list since the days of Lombardi will have to wait a little longer.

If the City of Green Bay, and surrounding communities, (Ashwaubenon) are serious about establishing and promoting "entertainment districts" as a means of boosting the economy, it seems that all of the controversy created by trying to regulate the hot dog vendor on Washington St. may be sending the wrong message. How many potential entrepreneurs with something worth while to offer will avoid getting involved with Green Bay politics?

From what we read, Brown County and Green Bay are making an effort to cut expenses in anticipation of reduced shared revenue payments from the state and uncertainty of other sources of revenue. Hopefully our school districts and other municipalities are following the same philosophy.

It seems that in the past, this was the time that department heads were busy preparing "want lists" to submit for budget approval, which usually included an increase over the previous year., Little attention was given by supervisors or public scrutiny given until the last minute when next years budget was to be approved. By that time it was too late to make any significant changes. Hopefully, the outcome of the present fiscal crisis will be budgets based on revenue that is available, or in other words, what taxpayers are willing or able to pay. It has been the other way around for too many years, which may be one reason that taxes in Wisconsin are so high already.

Governor Doyle was busy traveling about the state vetoing and modifying the state budget passed by the legislature in front of special inter-

est audiences. No word yet where the funds to cover items he is putting back in the budget will come from. He is now proposing a \$150 million emergency fund, which is a good idea for any budget, depending on what type of emergencies you are preparing for.

Anyone who has an internet connection probably has their own opinion of all the "SPAM" advertising that has been prevalent lately. By most peoples standards, much of it is not suitable for young people who view it, and existing laws and standards already prohibit it from radio, TV, magazines and newspapers, due to its objectionable content. One other side effect of SPAM is the danger posed with spreading computer viruses through unknown sources.

Now Congress is debating the issue, and one of our sacred rights, "Freedom of Speech" seems to be the stumbling block. Whatever Congress does, it won't make everybody happy, but let's hope it isn't a bunch of laws, restrictions, fees and taxes on the internet which would effectively hinder the publics use of this wonderful communication tool

Several area municipalities have approved borrowing resolutions to cover ~~possible shortfalls in their operating budgets~~ brought about by the states problems. Anyone with a large credit card balance could advise them that this is *not* good financial management.

The Village of Allouez is now stuck with \$54,000 legal fees encountered ~~by the owner of land they tried to obtain for their new village hall plus their own attorney's fees in pursuing this bad idea.~~ While other municipalities are looking for ways to cut expenses, they are proposing to add a new fire station and community center to their new village hall. Is this really the way taxpayers want their money to be spent? In the meantime, the Village Board seems to be proceeding full speed ahead with construction plans. Village taxes for 2002 increased 6.1% over 2001. With **Things That Make Us Wonder – Con't.** 20 year bonding, the new Village Hall complex could add 5-7% or more to the

2002 tax rate. It appears there could already be substantial property tax increases across the board due to the states reduction of shared revenues.

While the legislature and governor have sparred over Wisconsin's \$3.2 billion problem, the Federal deficit is estimated at \$455 billion and climbing. We see little sign of fiscal responsibility by either party, and no project seems too expensive to initiate. Perhaps if Washington set a better example, some of it might rub off on state governments.

Hopefully not too many more deadlines will be met before Green Bay and surrounding communities can come to some kind of agreement on a Metropolitan Water Authority. This seems to be more politics than our elected officials working together to provide a suitable source of water for our growing community that will cover the foreseeable future at a reasonable cost to users. We need action rather than excuses. It is disturbing that petty politics and the power of control be allowed to stand in the way of something so important to the future of Brown County. Did anyone ever think of looking at the Metropolitan Sewer District as an example of area cooperation for the good of all?

We hear that young people are becoming more addicted to gambling. No surprise with lottery tickets available at checkout counters and TV commercials plugging the state lotteries and casinos. Perhaps this is by design to feed these "entertainment" diversions.

Gov. Doyle has announced plans to proceed with the Fox River cleanup using \$400 million or so from our paper companies. The plan apparently involves building a pipeline along the river to pump waste to a disposal site. If everything were to proceed, is it possible we could be drinking water from the Fox River before an agreement is reached between Green Bay and surrounding communities to build a new pipeline to Lake Michigan?

The NWTC administration has joined other state funded agencies claiming they would have to drastically cut

programs if state revenues were cut. They specifically proposed cutting their nursing programs, but no mention of all of the other classes covered in their recently mailed catalog.

In the meantime, it has been disclosed that 2/3s of the instructors at the Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC) earn over \$75,000 annually plus generous benefits, with some earning over \$100,000. Their part time schedule enables many of them to maintain lucrative part time jobs and businesses of their own.

It appears that naming rights for Lambeau Field are available for whoever comes up with the most money. Right now there is a group that is spending about \$1.5 million a month for this project that should be recognized for their contribution - The taxpayers of Brown County.

Let's hope that the announced closing of the Fisk Park swimming pool, in Green Bay after this year will not be turned into a poster child to raise property taxes. Any good accounting system includes a reserve for replacement of depreciation items, but this will probably end up being a matter of priorities.

Perhaps not really knowing where the money will come from, the Governor has announced plans to proceed with reconstruction of the Marquette Interchange in Milwaukee starting in 2004 with an estimated price tag of \$810 million, plus scheduling widening of highway 41 in Green Bay. We hope all the work done this summer was not wasted. While this may be welcome news, lets remember our gas-line taxes are already among the top five in the nation. The Gov. has even proposed toll roads in Wisconsin as a way to pay for new highways. One argument was we could get even with Illinois drivers visiting our state. Don't forget that Wisconsin drivers would have to pay this additional tax also. Only we are here all the time and not casual visitors. Maybe returning the \$500 million he "borrowed" from the transportation fund to balance the

budget should be his first priority.

California politics have been providing an interesting diversion to news from Iraq and the economy. Can you imagine over 100 candidates appearing in TV commercials? Apparently a background in politics has become more of a negative factor than a prerequisite in running for office. While it is questionable that Arnold Schwarzenegger would be able to turn things around if elected, his statement that politics is now being run by special interests and should be returned to the interests of the people is a good observation. If you don't believe this, look at the list of the top contributors to Wisconsin politicians and lobbyists that was just published, and then take a look at the leading beneficiaries of their legislation and where a lot of our money is going.

The economy makes it difficult to make good investments. Too bad we can't buy stock in the Indian Casinos as they must now be tremendously profitable, or maybe whoever it is that makes all of those orange barrels that line our highways this time of year?

Congratulations to Craig Van Schyndle for becoming the new Green Bay Chief of Police. It is nice to see someone focused on the position work their way to the top. We realize that when an important job opens up in local government or education, it is important to screen candidates from all over the country and select who appears to be the most qualified. We have been fortunate to have seen many gifted leaders come to the area and become part of our community. There are some we were just as glad when they left.

On the other hand, working for a promotion is one of the best incentives to an employee and should be honored whenever possible. Familiarity with the community, the department, and perhaps a perspective for improvements based on experience should be a big plus.

A new "survey" which probably received national attention rated the University of Wisconsin as the second best "Party School" in the nation. While the methodology used to determine the accu-

racy of this finding was not disclosed, the publicity created could be a testament of our tax dollars in action.

Throughout history there have been many wars fought between forces which had control of certain resources and those who coveted them. Today, in most cases free trade and responsible governments are able to negotiate peaceful solutions. Many of our valuable resources including energy and water are dwindling dramatically. In this country, much of the interior is experiencing shortages of fresh water as aquifers are depleted. There has been talk of piping water from the great lakes hundreds of miles to distant states. This has brought cries of protectionism from our local governments. What would happen if Texas and Oklahoma tried to keep all of their gas and oil for themselves in retaliation? In the meantime, Green Bay and surrounding communities try to work out an agreement to share water from Lake Michigan only 20 miles away.

A recent TV news item indicated that the Green Bay Police Dept. was somewhat behind in their filing department making it difficult to close cases, etc. Whether this was a workload problem, undertaking a new system that wasn't working, or another example of what could happen due to budget cuts wasn't made clear but it would seem that someone in charge shouldn't let situations like that happen.

The federal government has now announced that we can expect spending deficits for the next 8 years. What miraculous event will then occur, or what they intend to do in the meantime was not disclosed. No doubt they will then begin to work on the national debt again, or at least talk about it at election time. The problem is spending, and more specifically appropriating billions of dollars of spending at every thing that comes along in the hope of appeasing special interests.

The Madison School District has opted to provide same sex dependent health insurance coverage for its qualifying employees. Whether or not you approve of this benefit is another subject,

but right now with budget problems seems a bad time to incur additional cost on taxpayers. Dependent insurance costs in excess of \$1,000 monthly per employee, far more than single coverage, and is the fastest rising expense for school districts.

Right or wrong, it is too bad the Brown County Board has to become bogged down with political correctness and diversity issues over other county business. Somehow this seems to be somewhat politically motivated, and fanned by the media for whatever reasons they may have.

It is reported that so far the Lambeau Sales Tax, initiated in November of 2000, has collected about \$48 Million from Brown County business sales, and could be ended by 2015. That of course would be welcome news, and a credit to those connected with the stadium project. Obviously it would be impossible to predict what the economy will be like in 2015, or what form or amount of taxes we will be paying. Wouldn't it be nice if the community had no use for additional tax revenue and it could be put to rest at that time?

The DNR is proceeding with plans to break ground on their new \$5.3 million Green Bay office. This after their recent announcement they are laying off employees to cut costs. Some things don't always make sense.

It seems rather ironic that on one hand we pass laws and show compassion for the rights and privacy of individuals, while on the other hand allow personal or possibly sensitive information to be readily available to anyone with access to a personal computer. I am referring to the Wisconsin Consolidated Court Automation Program (CCAP), which allows anyone to

check Circuit Court records. All you need is a first and last name, and the county of residence. You do not require an address, or other more positive information. You can check tax liens, traffic cases, collection suits, and whatever else goes through Circuit Court. People with the same name get mixed together, so checking for a credit reference can be confusing and cause embarrassment to innocent parties.

Did you ever wonder if estimated operating budgets were ever developed for the new jail, the two new libraries, and the proposed new Mental Health Center before construction approval was requested. These items are seldom discussed (along with financing costs of new projects when they are being promoted), but they can make preparing future budgets very frustrating.

The Dept. of Revenue announced that despite an increase of \$72 million, or 1.5% in individual income taxes, 4.7% in corporate income taxes, and 1.1% in sales taxes the last fiscal year, the states revenue was still \$23 million or 0.2% below their estimates. This tends to reinforce the theory that our problem is increasing spending faster than increasing income.

There are a lot of things to wonder about. **Jim Frink - BCTA**

"Talk is cheap, except when Congress does it.: . . . Will Rogers

Articles and views appearing in the "TAX TIMES" do not necessarily represent the official position of the Brown County Taxpayers Association. We want to encourage discussion and input on current issues of taxpayer interest and invite your comments or articles suitable for future "TAX TIMES." Please send them to the BCTA, P. O. Box 684, Green Bay, WI 54305-0684, or call Jim Frink at 336-6410. E-Mail Frink@ExecPC.Com.

The TAX TIMES

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The TAX TIMES - September, 2003

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

Thursday - September 18, 2003. BCTA Monthly Meeting.
GLORY YEARS. 12:00 Noon.
There will be a speaker on a current taxpayer topic.

Thursday - October 16, 2003. BCTA Monthly Meeting.
GLORY YEARS. 12:00 Noon.
In addition to an important speaker, this meeting will also be the BCTA Annual meeting. Review of the past fiscal years activities and accomplishments. Selection of BCTA directors and officers for the coming year.

Thursday - November 20, 2003. BCTA Monthly Meeting.
GLORY YEARS. 12:00 Noon.
Program and 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 for meal – 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.

September,

2003



“Where is the politician who has not promised to fight to the death for lower taxes – and who has not proceeded to vote for the very spending projects that make tax cuts impossible!” .. Barry Goldwater

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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