
◆ The TAX TIMES ◆

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Newsletter of the Brown County Taxpayers Association

October, 2006

The following letter was sent by the Brown County Taxpayers Association to Green Bay Public Schools Superintendent Dan Nerad addressing our concerns with the proposed \$75 million referendum

BROWN COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION

P. O. Box 684

Green Bay, WI 54305-0684

October 2, 2006

Mr. Dan Nerad, Supt.
Green Bay Area Public Schools
Green Bay, WI 54303-1516

Dear Superintendent Nerad

Thank you for taking the time to speak at our August monthly meeting regarding the contemplated new high school. In addition I appreciate the invitation to discuss the referendum proposal at the District offices. As I stated at the August meeting, the BCTA is interested in becoming fully informed about the high school situation, and our members are interested in getting their questions answered.

In that regard, I believe the decision to not pursue a November referendum was a good one, in that additional time is needed to gather and respond to the questions and concerns of the district's taxpayers. I believe the arguments presented by Mr. Terry Fondow are a legitimate part of that discussion.

However, I and members of the Board of Directors are concerned by reports that you may recommend to the School Board a referendum on the date of the February primary election. As you have stated at the BCTA August meeting and at other venues, it is important that the district have the full support of the community in any undertaking as significant as this high school project. Given the *historical* voter disinterest and low turnout for February primaries we believe it would be inappropriate to schedule a referendum for that election. While construction costs may be affected, the April general election would be more consistent with your stated intent to garner indisputable citizen support.

It is my understanding you will be recommending next steps on this project to the School Board at its October meeting. I would ask that you not recommend a referendum at the February primary. I would be very happy to discuss the BCTA's concerns in this regard in greater detail, and welcome your call should you wish further discussion.

Sincerely,

BROWN COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION.

Richard Parins,

President

The BROWN COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION
Promoting Fiscal Responsibility in Government

Government Jobs Available – No Experience Necessary.

The qualifications for, and applying for state and federal government jobs can be demanding and complex.

First there are strictly specified educational, experience, age and physical requirements, which can greatly narrow down the field of qualified applicants. Once meeting these requirements you will likely be subjected to general knowledge and aptitude tests to further narrow the field of candidates. In certain cases, qualifying points are given for being a veteran, gender, minority or being handicapped. If you do get the job, you will likely have to start all over again if you want a promotion. Despite all the hassle, the generous salaries offered, plus an outstanding package of benefits make government employment attractive to many.

However, for those wishing to work for the government without going through the above process, (*or being drafted into the military*) there are a couple exceptions available. One is to be appointed by the Governor or President to a key management position which often may be a reward for political support. Another course is to run for political office.

The U.S. Constitution specifies that candidates for Congress be at least 25 years old, and have been a U.S. Citizen for at least 7 years. That's it, knowledge of the responsibilities of the job, or any of the other factors applicable to government employment are overlooked. Those wishing to become a Senator have slightly more requirements in that they must be at least 30 years old and have been a U.S. Citizen for at least 9 years. Prior legislative experience is not a prerequisite, however.



In Wisconsin qualifying to run for the State Legislature is even less restrictive. Section 6, Article IV of the state Constitution provides that, "*No person shall be eligible in the legislature who shall not have resided one year within the state, and be a qualified elector in the district he may be chosen to represent.*" In this case, the specifications for the State Legislature or Senate would be the same, which is probably fortunate as many voters probably do not realize there is a difference between the two, or far that matter between the people we send to Madison and those to Washington. They get their political education from watching TV ads.

While we may question the credentials of some of the people elected to public office, this is not necessarily a good or a bad system. It makes it possible for qualified people to seek public office and to support the American dream that any native born citizen can become President some day.

Although the usual qualifications for government employment don't necessarily apply to political office, there are a few unique obstacles to consider. First you have to declare yourself a candidate and somehow at least appear to be qualified for the job. A good physical appearance, ability to communicate, a mechanism for raising large amounts of advertising money, and the backing of a political party and/or a very large group of friends are all helpful for success.

This is the part where "No Experience Necessary" can be a factor. In private business, the road to the top often starts at the bottom. Not so in politics. A person can run for the U.S. Senate without first serving in Congress or for that matter any political office. We have seen it in Wisconsin. While the majority of our lawmakers seem to come from the legal profession, just about every occupation is represented. A doctor, priest or farmer can run for congress. We acknowledge that while any of these candidates may be better qualified and dedicated to the job than the professionals who have spent their life in public service, they may still have a lot to learn about the legislative process.



On the other hand, an incumbent or previous legislative experience may prove to be a handicap, and we are seeing it in the current election advertising. Voting records and previous campaign contributors are scrutinized and often facts are distorted. Actions and votes which may have seemed logical at the time can come back to haunt a candidate.

What may be more important is choosing a person to represent you in the legislature or congress who is not running on a limited platform of selected "hot" issues designed to draw public support just to get elected. Consider if your values are represented, and do your values agree with the best interests of your community and the country? Will he or she become a rubber stamp for a political party focusing on issues not necessarily representing these values? You must draw your own conclusions based on the qualifications they present.

How many people have we sent to Madison and Washington who have campaigned on a platform of fiscal responsibility and responsiveness to the people back home but have voted with the party bosses and big spenders?

Jim Frink - BCTA

National Debt Update.

On October 1, 2005, the U.S. National Debt was reported to be **\$8,478,853,951,770.19**. Amazingly this total was about \$45 Billion less than last month. The only explanations we can offer is that members of Congress are all home campaigning for re-election and are so busy digging into the source of their opponents contributions they are forgetting about spending the governments money. Another possibility is that the people of New Orleans are quiet since they got the Superdome fixed and their haven't been any other natural disasters to spend money on.

"In our brief history, we have shot four of our presidents, worried five of them to death, impeached one and hounded another out of office. And when all else fails, we hold an election and assassinate their character."

. . . P. J. O'Rourke

"When the President does it, that means that it is not illegal."

. . . Richard Nixon

September Meeting Notes. Terry Fondow Challenges "Need" for New High School

Monthly BCTA meeting held Sept. 21, 2006 at Titledown Brewing.

Terry Fondow, who has retired after serving eight years as principal of Green Bay's East High School, presented his reasons for opposing the referendum for construction of a fifth high school for the Green Bay School District.

First, he explained that the Green Bay School District does not need a fifth high school. The district's 2 percent growth forecast projected an enrollment increase of 354 for 2005-2006. The actual increase was 42. The district also included over 300 alternative high school students, who do not set foot in the existing high schools during schooldays, in its enrollment figures. Middle school enrollments will not reach capacity for several years. In fact, Washington Middle School enrollment has dropped, portending future enrollment reductions at East High School.

Second, he explained that the district can't afford to operate another high school along with multi-million dollar increases in other budget categories. The new high school will bring another complete set of overheads into the system. To pay for the additional \$2.5 million needed to operate the new high school, the district plans to have another referendum question. It will request RECURRING authority to exceed the state spending limits by \$2.5 million each year. This means that the district will never again have to request permission to spend \$2.5 million above the state limits for the district.

Third, Mr. Fondow explained that transferring students to the new high school would have negative consequences for students at other high schools. Poverty is a growing issue in the district, especially in the central part of the city. Of the remaining students at East High School, 50 percent would be living in poverty. At West High School, the percentage of students living in poverty would be 60 percent.

Additional concerns about the referendum were discussed. They included the \$65 million cost of the new building, the no-bid contracts with the architect and the construction firm, the expansive and inefficient design of the building, the lack of creative ideas to reduce the enrollment at Preble High School, and the district's rapidly dwindling financial reserves.

The next Brown County Taxpayers meeting will be on Oct. 19, 2006 at Titledown Brewing. The speaker will be Paul Thormadsgard, Executive Director of the Green Bay Metropolitan Sewerage District who will present an update. Details on the back page of this TAX TIMES. **Dave Nelson - Secretary.**

"The things that will destroy America are prosperity at any price, peace at any price, safety first instead of duty first, the love of soft living, and the get rich quick theory of life."
... Theodore Roosevelt

"Get your facts first, and then you can distort them as much as you want."
... Mark Twain

Program for October Meeting.

The next meeting of the Brown County Taxpayers Association is scheduled for October 19, 2006, and will feature Paul Thormadsgard, Executive Director of the Green Bay Metropolitan Sewerage District. We have asked Paul to update us on new projects within the district.

We also cordially invite an current candidates for public office to attend as guests and be recognized.

Details are on the back page of this *TAX TIMES*.

Federal Regulations Expensive for All Of Us.

An article in the September "Budget and Tax News" claims that for 2004, it is estimated that annual costs attributed to federal environmental, safety and health, and economic regulations amounted to about \$1.113 trillion. This is about 3 times the amount added annually to the U.S. National Debt.

The costs arise from price and safety restrictions, environmental regulations, compliance costs and hidden costs including price supports due to the regulations. When the federal budget is established, many of these costs are hidden deep in the fine print.

Basically these costs are passed on to taxpayers by 3 methods. Regulatory programs can be added to the budget and covered by increased taxes. The expense can be borrowed with a promise to make payment at some future time. More commonly laws are passed requiring private industry or state and local governments to bear the costs, AKA/unfunded mandates.

Most of these regulations are issued by various government agencies. For example, in 2005 Congress passed and the President signed 161 bills into law. During this time regulatory agencies issued 4,082 new rules. In other words, the agencies are doing the bulk of lawmaking.

The unfortunate thing is that these agencies seem to dominate regardless of who is President or in control of Congress. Budget and Tax News is published by the Heartland Institute, 19 N. LaSalle St., Chicago, IL 60603.

October 19, BCTA Meeting. Speaker

Paul Thormadsgard, Executive Director
Green Bay Metropolitan Sewerage District.

Titletown Brewing Co.

Candidates for Public Office are cordially invited to attend and be recognized.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE
www.BCTaxpayers.Org

How Do Wisconsin School Expenses Compare?

The Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance recently published a report comparing Wisconsin School expenditures with those of other states. The figures used are from 2003-04, the last available.

For purposes of this comparison, total expenditures are broken down by student, or the average cost per student by state. Expenses are given in 3 categories. Salaries, benefits, and miscellaneous expense items. Although salaries and benefits are not broken down by instructors and administrative/support staff, another section of the report indicates Wisconsin is close to the national average with 60.6% of total expenditures spent for instructional salaries. The national average is 60.5%.

Wisconsin's total expenditure of \$9,226 per pupil ranks 12 nationally and is about \$1,000 per pupil above the national average of \$8,287. Our cost per pupil is highest among our neighboring states.

Where Wisconsin is really different from the rest of the country is with a generous benefit package. Only New York and New Jersey are higher.

Wisconsin school districts paid an average of \$2,404 per pupil in the form of benefits in 2004, or \$873 more than the national average of \$1,531. The reasons for this difference were not specified, but apparently there are vast differences in insurance and retirement benefits from state to state. By comparison, Minnesota only pays \$1,456 in benefits and Illinois \$1,702.

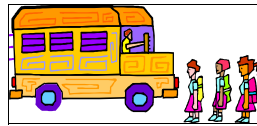
Wisconsin's salary expense was closer to the average ranking 22d at \$5,121 per pupil. As mentioned previously, this is all school salary expense, not just instructors. It could indicate a higher proportion of administrative and support staff in relation to instructors, higher instruction salaries, or smaller

class sizes in relation to the number of teachers.

While the national average for benefits as a percentage of compensation is 18.5% nationally, it is 26.5% in Wisconsin or 3d nationally. It is 27% in Green Bay. This is significant as these benefits are largely mandated by contracts and effect the tax levy more than salaries. Also, teachers seem to use take-home salaries and disregard their benefits when comparing their compensation with other occupations.

There are a number of conclusions which could be drawn when comparing the numbers. Not however, that Wisconsin teachers are poorly compensated or that we do not spend enough taxpayer money to educate our children in relation to other states.

Perhaps more important is that we should ask why school expenses per student in Wisconsin are well above the national average while there is a constant demand for more money. While we all appreciate the state paying for school expenses to relieve property taxes, the result is the actual total cost may be less of a concern to the average taxpayer. These numbers are not adjusted for average income by state.



We acknowledge there are a lot of variables to consider when making comparisons. An abbreviation of the report appears below.

JF

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

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

Do We Really Need A New High School?

By Terry Fondow

There are three main reasons to oppose the Green Bay Area Public School District referendum for a fifth high school.

1. A fifth high school is not needed. The Green Bay School District is highly unlikely to exceed the current high school capacity for the next 10 to 20 years.
2. We can't afford to operate a fifth high school.
3. Building a fifth high school will harm every student in every public school in the Green Bay District, especially, Franklin, West, Washington and East.

A Fifth High School is Not Needed.

The district enrollment projections are deeply flawed. The projections being used to justify building a fifth high school are based on a land use study of the Eastern suburbs from 1999 to 2004. The projections assume that the growth in that five year period will continue for the next 20 years and result in 354 new students for the Green Bay District every year (*nearly a 3% growth rate*).

The enrollment projections could not be compared to actual growth until the 2005/2006 school year. Instead of adding 354 students, the district added only 42. The actual growth rate was less than one half of one percent, not 3 percent.

In addition, the district included students in alternative programs in their projections. These students attend school outside of the high schools or after the regular school day and should not be counted in the enrollment projections. 326 students should be subtracted from the total projection.

The district lowered its projected growth rate to 2% after the media reported that actual growth was less than one half of one percent and agreed to subtract 212 alternative program students. Even using the district's projection that assumes a growth rate nearly five times that actual rate, the district will barely exceed capacity for high school students in 2014, and the district will still be well under capacity for middle school students.

We Can't Afford to Operate a Fifth High School.

The estimated cost to operate the new high school is approximately \$2.5 million dollars. The operating expense will be added to the current district deficit of \$10 million dollars. The money to operate this school will be taken from the operating budgets for the existing schools. Proving that we can't afford to operate a fifth high school, the district plans to ask voters to allow the district to tax at a level above the statutory limit set by the state to operate the new high school. If approved, the district can exceed the revenue limits forever.

The district has had a structural deficit for several years. To cover the deficit, the district has used the fund balance (savings). The fund balance is now almost depleted and the district has to have an \$11 million dollar line of credit to pay the monthly bills prior to the receipt of state aid. No one can remember when the district had to engage in borrowing to pay current bills in the past.

If a Fifth High School is Built, All Students will be Harmed.

If the referendum request to exceed the revenue limits does not pass, the \$2.5 million dollars needed to operate the new high school will come from the operating budgets for all other schools. To cover a \$5 million dollar shortfall last year, classroom budgets were cut from 9% to 35%. Adding another \$2.5 million dollars to the deficit will cause classroom budget reductions in the 15% to 50% range. If it does pass, the inflationary and other increases in operating expenses will have to come from the operating budgets for all other schools.

Because there is no enrollment growth to justify a fifth high school, the students for that high school will be taken from existing east side secondary schools and the district plans to put 400 - 600 middle school students in the new building in spite of the fact that the district will be under capacity at the existing middle schools by 500 students, even before the transfer of middle school students to the new building. East High School's enrollment will be cut to approximately 1000 students. The current capacity of East is 1560. Washington Middle School enrollment will be cut to under 700 students

in a building with a capacity of 1010. Both schools will have poverty rates around 50%, more than twice the poverty rate in the new school. Edison will have an enrollment of 950 students in a building with a capacity of 1200.

Because enrollment on the West side is decreasing, West High School will have an enrollment around 1000 students in a building with a capacity of 1350. Franklin will have an enrollment of approximately 750 students in a building with a capacity of 1010. Lombardi will have an enrollment of 860 in a building with a capacity of 1120.

The decline in enrollments in the existing secondary schools and the need to cover the operating expenses for the new school will mean less money and fewer opportunities for students in all other Green Bay Public Schools.

Other Issues

Building Cost = \$65 Million.

This will be the most expensive high school ever built in the State of Wisconsin. Most people don't know that the general contractor has already been selected without a bid process. That may explain why the cost is so high.

Using a New School to Generate Residential Growth.

The district wants this new high school because the leadership wants a showcase suburban high school to compete with East and West DePere, Ashwaubenon, Howard Suamico, Denmark, Luxemurg-Casco and Wrightstown. Business and political interests in the area support the fifth high school because they believe that it will be a catalyst for residential and commercial growth in the Eastern suburbs of Green Bay. It is not the mission of school districts to spend tax payer dollars to stimulate economic growth..

A troubling possibility is that single family homeowners may relocate from existing neighborhoods to the Eastern suburbs because it will appear that the City and the School District have shifted their focus in that direction, which will hasten the decline of existing neighborhoods and the institutions, like schools, that serve those neighborhoods.

Preble and Edison Overcrowding.

The district has repeatedly stated that Preble and Edison are terribly overcrowded, often saying that Preble's enrollment exceeds capacity by 350 students. Those statements are not true. Edison's enrollment is under that capacity of the building and Preble's enrollment is approximately 200 students above capacity, but Preble does not subtract the alternative program students from the reported enrollment, meaning that Preble is only 100 students over capacity. For a 100 student problem, a \$65 million dollar building for 2000 students is not the right solution.

Terry Fondow
Former Principal
Green Bay East High School

Tuesday, NOVEMBER 7, 2006

Be Sure To

VOTE !

Remind Your Friends *and* Neighbors to Vote Also.

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

. . . George Nathan

Statewide Referendums on Ballot.

In addition to the important races for state offices and Congress, there will be two interesting statewide referendums to consider, one binding and one advisory.

The first would add the following to the state constitution: *“Only a marriage between one man and one woman shall be valid or recognized as a marriage in this state. A legal status identical or substantially similar to that of marriage for unmarried individuals shall not be valid or recognized in this state.”*

What started out as a simple definition of marriage to discourage same-sex marriages as being legal in the state has been confused by the wording of the referendum. Apparently various activist groups fear the loss of certain benefits they already receive (or anticipate receiving). There has been considerable advertising opposing this amendment which may or may not be founded.

Simple words found in most contracts such as “beneficiary”, “will”, “living-will” and Wisconsin’s existing strict marital property rights agreement laws should cover most situations.

The other referendum concerns capital punishment and asks: *“Should the death penalty be enacted in the state of Wisconsin for cases involving a person who is convicted of first-degree intentional homicide, if the conviction is supported by DNA evidence?”*

This is a non-binding, advisory referendum to gauge public opinion. Even if passed into law, it is difficult to imagine anyone being put to death in Wisconsin considering the way the legal system works here. States where executions are a regular event like California and Texas waste money squabbling back and forth for years with appeals, etc., before pulling the switch. There have been heinous crimes in Wisconsin with a valid conviction that probably couldn’t have been supported with DNA evidence. While locking up a murderer for the rest of his life may be considered a waste of taxpayer money, the alternatives could be even more expensive. This referendum may have popular appeal but lacks common sense and would be a huge source of income for the legal industry. Perhaps it should be reworded.

JF

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

“No wonder Americans hate politics, when year in, year out, they hear politicians promises that won’t come true because they don’t even mean them.”

. . . Bill Clinton (1992)

The Wisconsin State Election Board.

This agency was created in 1974, at the time the state legislature enacted a comprehensive campaign finance disclosure law, Chapter 334, laws of 1973.

The board consists of nine citizen members, appointed by the Governor for two-year terms beginning on May 1 of odd numbered years. Of the nine members, one is nominated by the Governor, one by the Chief Justice of the Wisconsin Supreme Court, one by the Speaker of the Wisconsin Assembly, one by the Senate Majority Leader, one by the Senate Minority Leader, one by the Assembly Minority Leader, and the chief officer of each political party whose candidate for governor received at least ten percent of the vote cast in the most recent gubernatorial election. In this case a Libertarian member was elected to the board in addition to a Democrat and Republican making a total of nine members. While the board may claim to be “bi-partisan” simple arithmetic can usually give an advantage to whoever is governor at the time.

There are also 16 full time employees, with an annual budget of about \$5 million, partially reimbursed by the Federal Government. The board’s mission is to make the electoral process as responsive as possible to the needs of the voters, candidates, and election officials by administering and enforcing election and campaign finance laws.

The board is charged with developing policy, issues formal opinions, promulgates administrative rules, prescribes procedures and forms, conducts hearings and reviews appeals, brings civil actions to assess forfeitures, audits campaign finance reports, and related activities.

It is also the board’s responsibility to inform local officials of election procedures through workshops and publications, and is the primary election resource for local officials. They have compliance authority over the actions of local election officials who act contrary to law or abuse their discretion.

As a result of the Help American Vote Act of 2002 and changes in Wisconsin law the agency has been required to take on more responsibility in administering the conduct of elections in the state. This includes the implementation and maintenance of the official statewide list of eligible voters, and testing and security of electronic equipment and training of local officials and poll workers in their use. Although the Elections Board is responsible for administering the election laws on a non-partisan basis, it does not appear that the structure of the board truly allows this.

In recent months, the Wisconsin State Elections Board has been involved in a number of controversial decisions, including awarding a \$12,000,000 contract to a private firm in a failed effort to develop a state voter database. There have been claims of voter fraud in recent elections and questions of how to go about properly registering and identifying voters at the polls which have yet to be resolved.

More recently the board’s members voted against gubernatorial candidate Mark Greens use of \$468,000 of campaign contributions. Since there could be some question as to the rules and regulations regarding those contributions, and prior precedent established by the board in similar decisions. Some say the vote could possibly have been politically motivated. **Jim Frink - BCTA**

Things That Make Us Wonder.

The DNR and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency have announced plans to start removing PCB contaminated dredging from the Fox River in DePere next year.

About \$30 million out of a total of \$400 million has been allocated for this phase of the river cleanup. The announced intent is to haul the spoils by truck to a destination as far away as western Wisconsin or southern Michigan (via Chicago). This because the G-P site in Ashwaubenon or other less costly alternatives could not be approved.

We acknowledge that good or bad, the need for this cleanup has been established and approved and also realize nobody wants contaminated river bottom dumped in their back yard. Nonetheless, does it make sense to spend any of the cleanup funds hauling one truckload at a time of worthless muck to a dump someplace 300-400 miles away? It is still our money.

* * * * *

Most of us probably agree that way too much money is raised and spent for political advertising, along with the resulting influence it brings to those elected to office. So far attempts to remedy the situation have either been ignored or ineffective. This problem will likely be addressed immediately after the November election and put on hold until the next election thereafter.

* * * * *

The bigger problem seems to be the regulation of special interest ads sponsored by "section 527" groups which are not as restricted as other political donors. The sources of these ads are not always clearly identified and the messages are often far more negative than those sponsored by the candidates themselves. Unfortunately negative advertising turns many people away from the election process and politicians in general.

As a concerned citizen, you can draw your own conclusions based on facts, the candidates record, and your personal values. Recognize false and malicious advertising for what it is.

The Brown County Board has

proposed a referendum which if approved would seek state legislation to cut healthcare costs by 15%, and guarantee universal health care for all state residents. This probably wouldn't be impossible if the whole health care system could be redone, which may be beyond the scope of the county board. It would be more believable if the counties goal was to lower the cost of providing insurance to county employees in order to reduce our property tax bills. This all sounds nice but they might just as well mandate that pigs learn how to fly.

* * * * *

The Green Bay Police and Fire Commission has selected veteran city policeman Jim Arts to be the next chief. This is commendable that someone familiar with the city and the police department has been selected. The commission apparently determined Arts to be better qualified than other candidates from around the country and we wish him the best of support and success.

* * * * *

The DePere City Council has authorized a referendum to exceed the tax levy by \$500,000. They claim this is necessary to maintain the present level of service and provided mandated employee benefits.

They state that if not approved they will have to cut back on mowing grass at the parks, picking up debris, and making people stand in line longer at City Hall when they receive permits. It will be interesting to know how much of the increase will be for the summer help mowing grass at the parks and how much is for mandated employee benefits.

* * * * *

Despite various construction delays, work on the Central Brown County Water Authority's pipeline to Manitowoc has been proceeding in an effort to meet a Dec. 8, deadline established by the DNR and the U.S. Environmental Agency for completion.

Recall that this project was delayed for several years while the participating communities bickered with each other and the Green Bay Water Authority to determine the best source

of potable water for area residents and who would be charge of providing it.

One remaining problem is that when the DNR and EPA had established the Dec. 8, deadline for completing the project they also included fines to be paid if not completed by that time.

This would be a low blow as these fines would be passed on to the residential and commercial water customers. These ultimate users basically had very little to say about the political wrangling involved with establishing the water source, pipeline route, or who would be in charge when completed. Residents are already faced with a substantial increase in the price of their water as a result of these politics.

* * * * *

A recent article reports that Wisconsin and other states collect surplus materials and equipment from their various agencies and offer it for sale to the public. This is also a common practice for local government and school districts as it brings in cash for trash, just like a yard sale.

One question that arises is why some of the stuff was ever bought in the first place if it's no longer needed? Also, Couldn't some items like chairs, desks, and office equipment be used by other agencies needing chairs, desks, and office equipment?

* * * * *

The Federal Government reports that literally thousands of their laptop computers are missing. They can't account for them, even though many contain sensitive material. The largest number are from the census bureau but all agencies can share the blame. It is probably a matter of poor and irresponsible management with a complete disregard for taxpayer money.

When I was in the army I had to account for my blankets, canteen and helmet or pay for them when discharged. Sure could have used a laptop computer at the time.

* * * * *

The Green Bay School District has postponed the referendum for a new high school until the 2007 Spring election. We assume this will be the spring general election.

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As the elections draw closer, we will likely see more polls trying to predict the winners. Sort of like predicting the outcome of a football game. This is a lot more serious however, as some of the polls could have questionable methodology, and have been skillfully planted as a news item to influence a particular candidate or party. An example is a poll publicized recently predicting the outcome of the national congressional races. The prediction was based on the response of 789 registered voters nationwide. The exact questions asked, or the number who did not respond was not disclosed.

The point is that no matter how scientific the methods used, how could a selected 789 people speak for 300 million? Something else about polls, if the results are not favorable as anticipated by those who sponsor them, they can be disregarded and no one knows.

* * * * *

“Americans for Tax Reform”, an organization analyzing and comparing taxation trends reports that in 2006 the average Wisconsin wage earner worked for 186.2 days, or until July 6, to pay his local, state and federal taxes. We ranked 41st nationally.

* * * * *

In 2004, Wisconsin received \$0.82 in federal spending for every tax dollar sent to Washington, and ranked 39th nationally in return of federal taxes. This equated to a return of \$5,728 per capita. This is probably due somewhat to a lack of military bases or other federal institutions of significance. A lot of our money goes to fighting wars and cleaning up after natural disasters which we wouldn't want here anyway.

* * * * *

The National Taxpayers Union has reported that only 1 of 10 members of Congress supported legislation that would have reduced federal spending during the past year. There were 17 bills introduced in the house that would increase federal spending for every bill that was designed to cut spending. In the Senate the ratio was 31 bills to increase spending for each one to cut it. This actually is an improvement as in the previous year the ratio for Congress was 23 bills to 1 which would have increased Federal spending with 32 to 1 in the Sen-

ate. The report also disclosed that the average House Republican proposed boosting the federal budget by \$11.6 billion while Democrats proposed legislation which would have boosted the budget by \$547.4 billion. It was not disclosed how much the budget was actually increased.

* * * * *

It appears Brown County will pay the Village of Hobart \$1.5 Million or more to settle the villages lawsuit resulting from the placement of the counties waste transfer station. This was done against the villages protest several years ago.

While Hobart has a legitimate case, it is unfortunate that any matter in the public interest cannot be resolved by our elected officials without resolving to expensive attorney fees and lawsuits paid for at taxpayer expense. Hearings on the 2007 Brown County budget will begin shortly, and we can be sure there will be the usual proposed cuts of sensitive and relatively small items such as teen court, bookmobile, and veterans services. While we are not necessarily proposing these items be retained, the money to pay for them comes from the same taxpayer source as legal payments.

* * * * *

The 2006 Union Membership and Earnings Data Book reports that 49.5% of the Wisconsin Public Sector Workforce is unionized, ranking 12th nationally. The U.S. average is 36.5%.

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During the next few weeks public hearings will be held to approve the 2007 budgets for the county and various municipalities. If you concerned about your property tax bill which you will receive in December, the time to question it is **NOW**. The various departments have been working all year preparing their budget requests, but they must be approved by the supervisors whom you elect. Sometimes a question from the audience is all it takes to have an item modified or removed. At least you can ask them to justify their actions.

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It is bad enough that the negative campaign ads claim that a candi-

dates voting record has been against the public interest without accusing each other of criminal action due to their fund raising activities. The way it looks now, no matter who you vote for will put a criminal in office.

* * * * *

The UW System reports that in 2004 16.9% of freshman needed remedial education in math and 8.1% needed it in English. The real disturbing thing is not all of our high school graduates are even qualified to apply for college.

As usual, lots of things to wonder about.*

* * * * *

Jim Frink

“Things That Make Us Wonder” consists of thoughts that occur to us, mostly taxpayer related in some way, that come to mind during the days news events. Some are relatively unimportant and probably not worth commenting about. Others could easily be expanded to full length feature articles worthy of further study and action to protect our interests as taxpayers. We try to cover a wide variety of subjects in a limited space and put a different spin on items from what you read in the papers or see on TV. We acknowledge that our perspective of some issues in this column may be contrary to that of some our readers. However, one of our purposes is to encourage debate, as we realize there are two sides to every question. Comments are always welcome as well as suggestions for items to include in this section of the “TAX TIMES.”

“The taxpayer—That’s someone who works for the federal government but doesn’t have to take a civil service exam.”

. . . Ronald Reagan

“Ere you consult your fancy, consult your purse.” . . . Benjamin Franklin

“A public debt is a kind of anchor in the storm, but if the anchor is too heavy for the vessel, she will be sunk by that very weight which was intended for her preservation.”

. . . Colton

The TAX TIMES

Brown County Taxpayers Association
P. O. Box 684
Green Bay, WI 54305-0684

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Things That Make Us Wonder.
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The TAX TIMES - October, 2006

BCTA Meeting and Events Schedule. MARK YOUR CALENDARS.

Thursday - October 19, 2006. BCTA Monthly Meeting. 12:00 Noon
TITLETOWN BREWING Co., 2d Floor Meeting Room,
Speaker – Paul Thormadsgard, Executive Director,
Green Bay Sewerage District.

Tuesday - November 7, 2006. GENERAL ELECTIONS.
U. S. Congress, Wisconsin Legislature & Governor,
County Offices, State and Local Referendums.
BE SURE TO VOTE !

Thursday – November 16, 2006. BCTA Monthly Meeting. 12:00 Noon
Program to be announced.

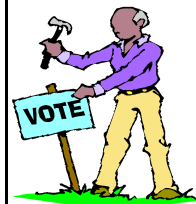
Thursday – December 21, 2006. BCTA Monthly Meeting. 12:00 Noon.
Program to be announced.

Unless otherwise notified, BCTA monthly meetings are held the Third Thursday of each month, 12:00 Noon, at the Tiletown Brewing Co., 200 Dousman St.

Meetings are open to the public.

BCTA Members, guests, and other interested persons are cordially invited to attend and participate in our open discussions.

COST: \$7.00 per meeting – payable at meeting, includes lunch, tax & tip.
Call Jim Frink — 336-6410 for information or to leave message.



October, 2006

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

“Politics is not a game. It is an earnest business.” . . . Winston Churchill

SUPPORT THE BCTA

New Members are Always Welcome. Call 336-6410
Write us at P. O. Box 684
or visit our website

www.BCTaxpayers.Org
for Details.