

An eagle for Brown County -- Send the ostrich back to the farm.

There is an eagle and an ostrich dressed as an eagle running for Brown County Executive. I am here to help you distinguish the two, if it is not entirely obvious from the brass beak and sham plummerly.

Last month, I used this space to describe Diamond Jim's new Soviet-style income redistribution budget as a large flightless bird, painted and appointed as an American eagle, perched preposterously in an oak tree, draped in the American flag.

Doyle with great effort tries to pass off his socialist budget as all-American -- for the middle class, 'for the kids', for the uninsured, the tired, poor, huddled masses yearning to breathe free.

But it's just Big Granny Government casting out her net of safety. Are you free if you must rely so heavily on government? Is this the Land of Liberty that leans like the Mob on government? How heavy does government's yoke lay on your shoulders?

No, the Doyle budget is designed to help his political buddies -- teachers, unions, tribes. And it's not like this is something new. The previous administrations used government to help their political and philosophical allies. There has always been waste, and spoils to election victors.

And the losers have largely been you and I, the regular folk they spend their campaigns saying they are going to help. When winners move from campaign phase to governing phase, they often find the missions incompatible. And the job of governing suffers for the sake of the next quadrennial interview.

Example: Doyle spent his first campaign vowing to knock 10,000 state workers off our payroll, to return to the leaner days before his arch-nemesis, Tommy Thompson, took the reins. He successfully knocked off several hundred unfilled positions. A few Thompsonite heads rolled. Then the low-hanging fruit was gone and his allies, leftovers from the Earl administration, got scared.

So, immediately after getting re-elected, Doyle adds back almost every job he cut -- in the baldest, boldest government expansion since W-2. And we all know how successful that was. Now it's divide and conquer, attack the weakest, the smokers, then the evil Rich Realtors, the greedy Health system; just pick a group and create a new fee or increase but never pretend it's a tax increase. He's a slick and clever Riverboat Gambler that Diamond Jim.

Politicians have forgotten what binds Wisconsinites together. The glare of the cameras has hidden the thread of libertarianism we all share. We are strung like a 5-million-bead pearl necklace with small government and civil liberties. Help us help ourselves.

The true eagle in the race for Brown County executive will be the one who rails longest and loudest against the Doyle budget. Salute the eagle with your vote, and flip the other the bird. Ostrich: the new 'other white meat.' Just check the packaging for the Union label.

Richard Parins — President

The BROWN COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION
Promoting Fiscal Responsibility in Government

Free Health Insurance, and a Cruise, and Packer Tickets . . .

Before I get started , I want to make some things clear. I support everyone in this state receiving health insurance, free of charge. Everyone should get to go on a free cruise in the Caribbean every winter. Finally, free Packer tickets for everyone in Wisconsin. And, an end to the violence in Africa.

You know, that really was easy. Saying that you support things that are impossible, impractical or that you cannot afford is just as easy as the Governor makes it sound.

If you lived in Wisconsin in 2006, you heard nine months (at least) of promises from the Governor that he would not raise taxes in Wisconsin. He got re-elected based, in part, on those promises.

Right out of the gate, the first fee increase was announced. Increasing the driver's license fee to refill the piggy bank the Governor emptied out to balance his last budget (\$1.1 billion since he took office four years ago, according to [WISTAX](#)) is a tax increase. If you like, you can call it a fee increase to soften the blow.

Then, the first health care fix came along, the cigarette tax increase. According to the Governor, we will solve our health care problems with this tax increase. Everyone who does not already have it will get free health care in our state and we will cure smokers of their nasty (but legal) habit. What happens when people stop smoking and our government-funded free health care system runs out of money?

The second health care fix is taxing hospitals. Taxing hospitals is going to make it more expensive if you use a hospital in our state. Anyone who thinks the cost of that tax is not going to get passed on to those of us who pay health insurance premiums in this state is not paying attention.

Next, Governor takes aim at oil companies with a \$270 million corporate tax. Don't worry about gas prices, the Governor will forbid the companies from passing the cost on to you. Talk about snake oil. Even my liberal friends (yes, I have some) don't believe that consumers won't feel the effect of this tax increase.

Next, he wants to let local governments raise your property taxes by 4% without asking the voters' permission. The Governor repeatedly vetoed a strict, responsible property tax freeze favored by an overwhelming number of Wisconsinites. He called the freeze "bumper sticker politics." Then, faster than you can say "Holy Whiplash", the Governor, in his last budget before re-election, included a porous "property tax freeze". He ran for re-election on a promise not to increase your taxes. Now, a few months later, he says he wants to relax the limit on how much property taxes can be increased without voter approval.

Our Governor said one thing to get re-elected and now he is doing something completely different. Wonder why people don't believe what politicians say anymore?

In the mean time, you can sign me up for the free Packer tickets.

Rep. Frank G. Lasee

February Meeting Notes.

Monthly BCTA meeting held Feb. 15, 2007 at Titledown Brewing Co,

Patrick Evans, Brown County Supervisor and candidate for Brown County Executive, spoke about his qualifications for the position of County Executive. He noted that he chairs the Brown County Human Services Committee which oversees a budget greater than \$100 million. He feels that his combination of business experience, education, and knowledge of county government make him the best qualified candidate for County Executive. He explained that his leadership held the size of the nursing home in the proposed new mental health center to 63 beds. He stated that managed care will have zero effect on the nursing home.

Gary Kreisler, candidate for Mayor of Green Bay, spoke about his concerns for the City of Green Bay. He stated that he is serving his fifth term as an alderman because he listens to the people and votes their way. He doesn't expect the Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) districts to contribute to tax relief for 20 years. He opposes the school referendum as it won't solve downtown problems. He believes the Redevelopment Authority is focusing on condos on the river instead of commerce to grow the economy. The city is hurting from historical concessions on labor contracts. More dollars should be invested in neighborhoods instead of the downtown. The immigration problem is a drain on the city.

President Richard Parins reported that his February 14 press conference about the school referendum got a good response. He proposed that all future construction projects be audited. Jo Egelhoff of FoxPolitics.Net observed that the Green Bay School District's cost per student is \$900 greater than Appleton's and \$600 above the state average.

Richard Parins noted that Governor Doyle's budget speech mentioned 14 different tax increases. It will be difficult to challenge them all.

Jim Frink reported that the \$700,000 reduction in tax revenues for the Stadium District really means \$140 million less business in Brown County.

The next meeting will be March 15, at Titledown Brewing. Details on the last page of this *TAX TIMES*.

Dave Nelson – Secretary

"I think congressman should wear uniforms like NASCAR drivers so we could identify their corporate sponsors."

. . . Thought for the day

"Our major obligation is not to mistake slogans for solution."

. . . Edward R. Murrow

VISIT OUR WEBSITE
www.BCTAxpayers.Org
Email, BCTA@ExecPc.Com

"Opportunity Budget" is pie in the sky, pie in your eye...

I counted 14 times "opportunity" was mentioned. And how many times, in his majestic budget address, did Governor Doyle mention "investing" in this or that? (13) How many times did he mention "big oil?" (8? – I was in the middle of doing the dishes – and my counting on that one ran askew.)

This budget is packed with spin, faulty promises, and smoke and mirrors.

A couple of good ideas:

* Move toward health insurance for every resident of Wisconsin. That means the government needs to do its part in controlling health care costs and in subsidizing insurance costs for low income households.

* There is no better social program than a job. (Not too original, but true.)

* Wisconsin has the best cows. (Well, why wouldn't that be true?)

Stuff I was insulted by: (It's not an exhaustive list – there was just too much stuff thrown at the wall for me to mention it all)

* Governor Doyle is still claiming he balanced the last two biennial budgets. What is this guy smoking? Doesn't he get it? Wisconsin is in deep budget trouble, unlike any other state in the nation.

* Repeated dissing of "big oil" and "big tobacco." This is chicken bravado – and whining besides.

* He bragged again about how he held local property taxes to the smallest increase in a decade. You, of course, know why this happened because you read FoxPolitics. If, in an election year, you add lots of dollars to fund schools via the Frankenstein veto that confiscated monies in the Transportation Fund, local school spending has to go down (or not go up as fast). Do they call that complementary equations or something like that?

* Smoke and mirrors revenues – like eliminating duplicative HR systems, "using technology to save \$100M", and expanding BadgerCare by becoming more efficient. Why didn't he do that four years ago?

And then... the really tough choices: And now, we "must make hard choices"... and this "begins with hard cuts." Like cutting prisoner health care. Not much of a constituency there to complain, is there? But kids. Now that's a different story. It was Hillary Clintonesque to hear Doyle describe "the day I walked our first child to school....my eyes welling up with tears..... we all took a leap of faith and entrusted our children to the public schools." Oh my gosh.

Prisoners vs. your first grader. Can you make that tough choice?

With all the talk about education, one thing I didn't hear was word one about accountability. Nothing. Just about how wonderful and precious our children are and how much more we've got to continue to fork over for public education systems.

And then – blame "big oil" for all your budget problems. Evil, evil big oil and record profits. Such an easy target for a new tax. Just for the record, Exxon Mobil nearly always earns more money than any other company on the Fortune 500. But that's because it's the largest company in the world! But looking at gross profit margin, it ranks well behind in the pack. Financial institutions, pharmaceutical companies and tobacco conglomerates typically earn significantly greater gross profit margins than "big oil." And measure profit per employee and "big oil" doesn't come even within fumes of the top of the list.

And that's another thing. Tax "big oil" and then say we're going to "help the nation kick its addiction to foreign oil." Now that makes sense, doesn't it?

All that spin. Opportunity. Investment. Middle class tax relief. A "special and sacred obligation to the children of this state." "We shouldn't have to choose between teachers and police officers." Protect our kids. As Frederica Freyberg, Wisconsin Public Television, surprisingly said before the speech, "If you've got a problem in Wisconsin, the governor's got a program for you." Hear, hear. **Jo Egelhoff, FoxPolitics.net.**

(Sign up for free daily E-Mail news summary at News@FoxPolitics.net.)

A Friend of The Taxpayer.

The Brown County Taxpayers Association would like to honor former East High Principal **Terry Fondow** as a true "*Friend of The Taxpayer.*"

While we acknowledge that Supt. Dan Nerad and the Board of Education worked long and hard in preparing and presenting a plan for the construction of an additional high school, it was Mr. Fondow who stepped forward to publicly question the need for such an expensive and extravagant expenditure at this point in time.

Apparently his arguments were considered valid as the referendum supporting the new school was defeated by a 2 to 1 margin. We realize there are many problems and considerations, many of them mandated facing the School District, and provisions for growth will have to be addressed. We are proud of our schools and the standards of good management and education they have established.

However, there are also many other challenges facing the taxpayers of Green Bay and the rest of Wisconsin at this time. While we all truly agree that good schools and education of our children should receive top priority, pocketbook resources are also somewhat limited.

We are sure the Green Bay Area Board of Education will take this along with many other factors into consideration when re-examining their options and future plans to meet the needs of our community. **JF**

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

The 2007 TAXPAYERS SURVEY.

Thank you to our members and other readers of the "TAX TIMES" who took the time to complete our annual survey of taxpayer concerns. We had a record response, and it was obvious from the answers and comments that respondents were familiar with the issues giving them careful thought.

Although some of the questions had a larger majority indicating "Yes" or "No" than others, there really are no correct answers. It is your interpretation and the impact of the issues on the economy and well being of the state and nation. We realize that everyone has their own opinion. All answers are given by percentage of response accordingly .

Unfortunately this questionnaire was prepared prior to Gov. Doyle's budget address which could have added a couple of more pages of questions for us to ponder. Below are the Survey questions and your responses given by percentages.

The energy crisis will likely be a taxpayer issue for a long time. What are your thoughts?

#1 – Stricter requirements should be imposed on all users of energy to conserve supplies.

YES 59.6% NO 40.4%

#2 - Subsidizing ethanol production and mandating its use is a good idea. **YES 14.9% NO 85.1%**

#3 – Keep developing our own available sources and use until depleted. **YES 77.8% NO 22.8%**

#4 – Make developing new sources of energy a scientific priority with government backing.

YES 87.5% NO 12.5%

Comments: Investigate new technologies to produce new energy from garbage. Nuclear energy should be put back on the table ASAP.

Concentrate on conservation as well as environment. Be sensible and within reason. Allow drilling for our own oil. Create more nuclear power plants. They have been proven very safe. **One conclusion is there has to be a better solution Ethanol.**

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There has been much discussion of Campaign finance reform and political ethics. Your thoughts.

#5 – Control over elections and ethics boards should be completely non-partisan.

YES 98.0% NO 2.0%

#6 – Sponsors of "issue ads" and sources of their financing should be clearly identified.

YES 100.0% NO 0.0%

#7 – Stricter limits on contributions and complete public disclosure should be required.

YES 96.08% NO 3.92%

#8 – Use of opponent's images on public advertising should be outlawed or restricted.

YES 75.5% NO 24.5%

Comments: Assess fines and censure for violations. Donors to candidates & sponsors of ads should be quickly identified. Political ethics is a misnomer! **Conclusion-There is a long to go to clean up political campaigns and ethics.**

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Estimates are that 100,000 (or more) undocumented aliens are living in Wisconsin. Your Thoughts.

#9 – The Depts. of Immigration, Social Security and the IRS should enforce our laws as intended.

YES 100.0% NO 0.0%

#10 – Laws require employers to verify citizenship of employees and these laws should be enforced.

YES 100.0% NO 0.0%

#11 – Absolutely no citizen benefits including drivers licenses should be allowed w/o proof of citizenship.

YES 98.1% NO 1.9%

12 – The universal use of English as the official language of the United States should be encouraged.

YES 98.0% NO 2.0%

#13 – All immigrants create diversity and contribute their culture. Not really a taxpayer related issue.

YES 45.8% NO 54.2%

#14 – Amnesty should be provided to illegal immigrants who report and apply for citizenship.

YES 24.5% NO 75.5%

Comments: Enter legally or get deported-Period . 3 steps, deal with current issue, adopt forward looking immigration plan and enforce new plan. Check tariff laws which may be causing immigration. If they're hear let them stay, but they must assimilate to our culture and not other way around. Quotas established for each country should be enforced. What part of "illegal" don't politicians get. You can't violate other laws without consequences. This is a "taxpayer issue."

* * * * *

The State of Wisconsin could have a budget deficit of \$1.6 Billion this year. What do you think?

#15 – More expenses such as schools and highways should be paid by local property taxes.

YES 25.0% NO 75.0%

#16 – The state budget should be balanced and changes by the governor approved by the legislature.

YES 100.0% NO 0.0%

#17 – Spending restrictions of some type similar to TABOR should be imposed to control spending.

YES 92.2% NO 7.8%

#18 – We voted for the legislature and they should do what is necessary including raising taxes.

YES 29.2% NO 70.8%

Comments: Don't add programs we can't afford without raising taxes. Outlaw unfunded spending mandates. Raise taxes and fees only by supermajority vote. Reel in pork barrel spending and don't make public service such a lucrative profession. Cut state taxes and fees and move more programs to the local level. **Conclusion- 100% in favor of legislature approving budget changes by the Governor. Some type of spending limits should be imposed. We voted for our legislators, but they don't always keep their election promises.**

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There are many proposals to subsidize the cost of medical care and insurance. Your thoughts.

#19 – We should consider a Canadian type system where everyone is taken care of by the government.

YES 18.7% NO 81.3%

#20 – A government subsidized insurance plan should be initiated to cover all uninsured citizens.

YES 26.0% NO 74.0%

#21 – All employers should be required to provide health insurance for all employees.

YES 24.4% NO 76.6%

#22 – A blue ribbon committee should examine the cost of medical care and recommend solutions.

YES 83.7% NO 16.3%

Comments: Just because someone has health insurance doesn't mean they can afford health care, unless of course they are public employees. Encourage the use of HAS so people regulate their own spending. A committee should represent employers, insurers, the insured, medical representatives and any other stakeholders. Federal legislation to equalize medical costs with what the world is paying. Wealthy individuals should pay more for coverage. Blue ribbon committee should consist of non-political qualified people. Tell the truth about the Canadian system – their people come here for care. Have our politicians ever looked at the results of socialized medicine? There have been tons of research with good ideas ignored. **Conclusion: No call for mandated insurance coverage or universal health care. Better solutions are available and should be considered.**

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#23 – **Assuming that more or less could be allocated to various/municipal budgets, would you change the priorities of any of the following items?** Following is the list of items, and percentage of responses for each. Our assumption was that the budget total would remain the same, with increases in one expenditure offset by reduction elsewhere.

Downtown Development/parking.

MORE 7.8% LESS 41.2% OK AS IS 51.0%

Fire and Police Protection

MORE 35.3% LESS 11.8% OK AS IS 52.9%

Human Services

MORE 8.2% LESS 38.8% OK AS IS 53.0%

Fox River and Bay Cleanup

MORE 6.2% LESS 39.6% OK AS IS 54.2%

Higher Education/Colleges

MORE 3.9% LESS 37.2% OK AS IS 58.9%

Jail Facilities and Staffing

MORE 10.6% LESS 31.9% OK AS IS 57.5%

Local Public School Systems

MORE 0.0% LESS 56.2% OK AS IS 43.8%

Public Employee wages/benefits

MORE 4.3% LESS 59.6% OK AS IS 36.1%

Parks and Libraries

MORE 16.3% LESS 24.5% OK AS IS 59.2%

Highways and Infrastructure

MORE 27.5% LESS 3.9% OK AS IS 68.6%

Trash Pickup/Solid waste disposal

MORE 8.3% LESS 10.4% OK AS IS 81.3%

Taxpayers interested in core services such as police and fire protection, good roads, etc. It appears that schools and downtown are perceived as using too much available taxpayer money.

#24 – **Noting that the above taxpayer items are all important, and a need can be established for additional spending at budget time, would you consider an increase in your property or other taxes accordingly.**

Each year there are always calls for increased spending on certain items. Question #23 would balance the budget by shifting

items from one item to another. This question asks if you would be willing to accept higher taxes for certain services.

BUDGET ITEM % Favoring higher taxes to maintain.

Highways and Infrastructure	39.2%
Fire and Police Protection	37.3%
Trash Pickup & Solid Waste	17.6%
Human Services	13.7%
Public Employee Wages/Benefits	7.8%
Higher Education & Learning	7.8%
Fox River & Bay Cleanup	5.9%
Jail & Staffing	5.9%
Local Public School Systems	3.9%
Downtown Development/Parking	1.9%
Parks & Libraries	1.9%
None of the above	41.2%

There were some surprises here as the question is if respondents would support an increase in taxes to support certain items.

The final section of the survey consists "Yes" or "NO" questions covering current issues of taxpayer concern.

GREEN BAY AND BROWN COUNTY ISSUES.

#25 – **It will cost \$800,000 to replace the roof on the old Brown County Arena. A worthwhile expense?**

YES 51.1% NO 48.9%

(This should be paid for by Arena profits.)

#26a– **Do you agree with the library selling artifacts?**

YES 50.0% NO 50.0%

#26b– **Should the Museum do the same?**

YES 34.0% NO 66.0%

(If the Library does it, why not the Museum?)

#27a– **Should the Brown County Mental Health Center be downsized?**

YES 76.6% NO 23.4%

#27b– **Should it be privatized?**

YES 74.5% NO 25.5%

#28 – **Do you agree there is a need for a \$65 million 5th Green Bay high school at this time?**

YES 7.8% NO 92.2%

#29 – **Should "tax exempt" entities pay a maintenance fee for city/county services they receive?**

YES 85.2% NO 14.3%

(Many exempt organizations could afford this.)

#30 – **Do you agree city and county department overtime should be budgeted and held accountable?**

YES 98.1% NO 1.9%

#31 – **Should property tax reassessments be changed only on a qualified inspection of your property?**

YES 92.2% NO 7.8%

(Office assessments have proven costly for some residents.)

#32 – **Would you endorse an efficiency audit of all municipal, schools and county spending to include salaries, overtime, benefits and other expenses, seeking ways to improve public services?** Continued next page

YES 96.0% NO 4.0%

#33 – **Do you believe the media gives fair consideration to taxpayer related concerns and issues?**

YES 6.5% NO 93.5%

#34 – **Should candidates for public office pledge not to raise taxes without public approval?**

YES 87.5% NO 12.5%

(We feel taxpayers should know a candidates intentions.)

Taxpayer survey – continued.

#35 – When public employee salaries are listed, should the taxpayer cost of health insurance, retirement pay, sick leave and other benefits be included in the total?

YES 92.0% NO 8.0%

(Taxpayer know the salary but not the total cost of employees.)

#36 – Should negotiated public employee labor contracts be published as part of the state’s open meeting and freedom of information laws?

YES 96.0% NO 4.0%

(Taxpayers should know what they are paying for.)

#37 – Should health insurance & other employee benefits be limited to a percentage of salary?

YES 87.8% NO 12.2%

(Salaries are often publicized but benefits are what makes our tax bills go up each year.)

STATE OF WISCONSIN.

#38 – Could legal notices be posted on the internet rather than newspapers to save money?

YES 58.3% NO 41.7%

(Could save the state and municipalities a lot of money and do a better job.)

#39 – Publicizing delinquent taxpayers in Wisconsin has been successful. Should this program be expanded?

YES 92.2% NO 7.8%

#40 – Should any public financing (taxpayer money) be used to support election campaigns?

YES 18% NO 82%

(A popular idea among politicians but there are too many other uses for taxpayer money.)

#41 – Do you agree with the proposal giving free UW tuition if graduates agree to stay in Wisconsin?

YES 19.6% NO 80.4%

(Hopefully this idea will just go away.)

#42 – Should stricter limits be placed on medical malpractice lawsuits in Wisconsin?

YES 86% NO 14%

#43 – Tribal gaming revenue in Wisconsin is the 5th highest in the nation. Should more go to the state?

YES 95.8% NO 4.2%

#44 – Should the QEO (Qualified Economic Offer) be continued to protect taxpayer interests?

YES 93.7% NO 6.3%

#45 – Should state and local referendums be allowed only on general not primary election days?

YES 83% NO 17%

#46 – Is increasing motor vehicle registration fees and the gas tax justified at this time?

YES 16.3% NO 83.7%

(We need money for highways but not to replace what was taken from the highway fund for other purposes.)

#47 – Should the University of Wisconsin budget be more open for public approval?

YES 98.0% NO 2.0%

#48 – Do you agree with raising cigarette taxes by \$1.25 at this time?

YES 51.0% NO 49.0%

#49 – Should state employees receive “domestic partner” benefits in lieu of legal dependent benefits?

YES 8.2% NO 91.8%

#50 – Should ethanol based gasoline be mandated even if it is not cost effective?

YES 7.8% NO 92.2%

#51 – Do you agree with the policy of using segregated highway funds to balance the state budget?

YES 0.0% NO 100.0%

(See answer to question #46.)

#52 – Should fees charged to replace taxes be considered “tax deductible” for income tax purposes?

YES 87.8% NO 12.2%

(Taxes are deductible and fees are used in lieu of taxes.)

#53 – Should Wisconsin stop accepting waste from other states and worry more about Wisconsin?

YES 97.9% NO 2.1%

(Using our landfill space for garbage not worth it.)

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.

#54 – Would you approve of a “flat tax” to replace the present federal income tax code?

YES 78.7% NO 21.3%

#55 – The U.S. Treasury claims pennies are expensive to mint. Should producing them be discontinued?

YES 47.8% NO 52.2%

Indicate your city, town or village of residence.

CITY OF GREEN BAY 50%

ELSEWHERE IN BROWN COUNTY 50%

(Allouez, Ashwaubenon, DePere, Suamico, Etc.)

That’s it, our 2007 Taxpayer Survey. We thank everyone who took the time to complete and submit the form. You can check your answers with the rest of the respondents. The results are important to let us know what are members think about certain issues as well as reinforce our position on matters of taxpayer concern..

We acknowledge that some of the questions may have been redundant or “no-brainers.” The purpose of this survey is also to illustrate the huge amount of challenges facing taxpayers today. Thank you to the committee who helped prepare this questionnaire. We hope you found it interesting.

“We wouldn’t need oil at all if there was a law mandating that auto makers manufacture perpetual motion machines.” . . . James Taranto

“Liberty is not a means to a higher political end. It is the highest political end.” . . . Lord Acton.

“The true danger is when liberty is nibbled away, for expedients and by parts.” . . . Edmund Burke

National Debt Update.

As of the end of February, our National Debt has risen to **\$8,775,067,046,115.01**. That would be Eight Trillion, Seven Hundred-Seventy Five Billion, Sixty-Seven Million, Forty-Six Thousand, One Hundred Fifteen dollars and one cent if anyone is interested in writing Uncle Sam a check. Better yet just put it on your Capitol One card. Wouldn’t make much difference.

The balance has gone up over \$88 Billion since last month, or \$135 Million for each Congressman and Senator to appropriate a project or two for the folks back home to remember next election.

Things That Make Us Wonder.

The Brown County Professional Football Stadium District reported a drop from \$20.8 million to \$20.1 million between 2005 and 2006 in their dedicated .5% county sales tax. This represents \$700,000 less to pay off the new stadium and atrium.

While we appreciate this loss of revenue, we believe the real story should be that somewhere, somehow, all of the county business establishments which are compelled to collect this tax pennies at a time lost about \$140 million in taxable sales revenue during the same period of time. It takes \$200 in taxable retail sales to produce \$1.00 at .5%.

The state would also have lost about \$7 million in regular sales tax revenue assuming their figures are correct. We would suggest questioning the states math which indicate this reduction of business in Brown County. Most indicators claim the entire states economy was up for the year 2006..

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Reports are that Gov. Doyle spent almost \$10.5 million, or about \$3 million more than Mark Green in the recent election. He has now asked that independent organizations running "phony issue ads" be required to report the sources of their income as proof we need campaign finance reform.

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Unfortunately the Steven Avery trial has been more of a media choreographed event rather than a matter of legal justice. Too bad they can't just move the whole affair to Hollywood and sell the movie rights for profit. It would certainly save the taxpayers of Manitowoc and Calumet Counties some money. Reports are that this affair is consuming a major portion of their annual courts budget.

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A bill in Congress would broaden extending Social Security benefits to illegal immigrants, assuming they meet certain requirements. Meanwhile the rest of us wonder if the system will survive long enough to pay the benefits that we and our employers provided for

all of our working lives. Another question would be how does an illegal alien qualify and obtain Social Security identification in the first place?

When we retire all of our life's earnings are examined to determine our benefits. Any evidence of someone else using our name or number, or wages reported under an non-existent person should be immediately evident. An employer is required by law to verify the citizenship and Social Security ID of any new employee but somewhere the Administration has lost control of its responsibility.

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State and local officials are becoming alarmed by the amount of agricultural land that is being converted to residential and commercial development. The U. S. Department of Agriculture reports that from 1996 to 2002 Brown County alone lost about 10,000 acres to development, or about 1% or available land per year. This can't go on forever.

While development at this rate may be what keeps the economy going, what will we have left 10 or 100 years from now? One factor that may accelerate this loss of farm land is that many rural areas require that new residences must be built on a large plat of ground; 2-3 acres for example. While the reasons for this may be to provide privacy and allow for septic systems, etc., they also eat up a lot of land.

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The Legislature recently voted 70-25 to approve a constitutional amendment revising the Governor's line-veto power, which has become known as the "Frankenstein" Veto.

It was originally intended to allow the Governor to eliminate frivolous or other budget items he deemed costly and unnecessary for the welfare of the state, thus saving taxpayers money. This was and is a good idea as legislatures (and Congress), have a habit of loading all sorts of questionable spending projects into a budget bill at the last minute in the hope they will be approved. Items that would never be approved on their own merits.

Unfortunately recent governors have used their line-veto power to

insert rather than delete expenses. This is done by shifting budget items from one account to another, such as was done with the transportation budget. The budget also contains provisions which effect state law and policy which governors have been able to alter with the stroke of a pen and by-passing the legislature. Gov. Doyle has shown ability to use the line item veto to a new level. It is also unlikely it will be changed as long as he is governor.

The wording of a new amendment would be critical. The governor exercising his power to eliminate wasteful spending is good tool that should not be abused. Also, some provision should be made to restrict inclusion of policy items in the budget. These should be handled and approved as separate items.

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One of the newly elected U.S. Senators, Jon Tester of Montana, has started to post his entire daily schedule on his website so the folks back home know what he is doing. This includes his meetings with lobbyists, professional associations, constituents who visit, Indian tribes, business interests along with time in the Senate Chambers and committee hearings. It may be a question of how long he keeps this up but it sounds like a great idea.

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It is reported that problems with Milwaukee's sewage tunnel system are allowing ground seepage. It may have to be closed down for repairs taking a year and costing millions of dollars.

In the meantime, every big rainfall could dump millions of gallons of raw sewage directly into Lake Michigan. Now won't this be a challenge for the states regulatory people and environmentalists to figure out?

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The U.W. Madison is continually requesting more money under the premise that they are prevented from offering all of the major programs that students desire or require. More money can solve all problems, so they say .

While this may be true, the question is are their facilities really being used to capacity and are instructors doing all they are capable of doing? We realize



the importance of the UW System to the state and our future but from the outside it often appears they spend more effort in making excuses for not doing their job than actually trying to do it.

In the meantime Gov. Doyle is possibly making things worse with his new budget. First he has proposed domestic partner benefits for university employees. While this may be proper and forthcoming, is the cost to taxpayers an appropriate item at this time?

Next he proposed providing in-state tuition to illegal aliens who graduate from Wisconsin High Schools. A reward for not being caught? No price tag attached. Finally he would allow 17,000 professors and other employees to form unions. Enough said.

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Sen. Risser, (d), has introduced a bill enabling 17 year olds to vote in a primary election assuming they would be 18 by the general election. While only a few new voters would be eligible, it could make a lot of work for election clerks, etc. What would really be nice would be some way of getting all the people older than 18 to get out and vote rather than sitting at home complaining about the government.

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The Presidential election is still about 18 months in the future and already media polls are trying to pick the winners for us. Hypothetical match ups or announced or potential candidates are being matched along with the odds of their nomination and election.

While at this point it is just interesting speculation it can have the effect influencing voters strictly on the results of these polls rather than who may be most qualified. Often the source, methodology, or participation of polls is not disclosed or dubious. Also, they can be placed by the various candidates publicity teams for their own advantage.

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While the Green Bay School District reports a shortage of classroom space, several area parochial schools are sitting vacant. Due partially to the lack of students able to afford tuition and churches unable to absorb operation costs. Also we understand that there are

vacant and under-utilized public grade schools available in the Green Bay system. It would seem conceivable that some of this space would be suitable for school district purposes. This could save taxpayers a lot of new construction costs as well as save maintenance expense for the churches.

* * * * *

About 18 years ago the Brown County Taxpayers Association was successful in promoting a referendum establishing "numbered" seats for members of the school board. This simply established that candidates represent a geographic area of the district the same as city council or county board members represent a particular ward or area.

The intent was to encourage candidates to seek board positions and to give equal representation on the board for residents of all parts of the district.

Unfortunately this plan did not stay in effect for long, with the result board members can now reside anywhere they want within the district. We acknowledge the board is most considerate and consciences of the entire district as a whole and does an admirable job of overseeing this huge operation.

There may be some advantages though of giving numbered seats another try sometime in the future.

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Nobody seems to know how many undocumented (illegal) aliens we have living comfortably in our United States. We realize the majority represent well meaning families seeking a better life, but there are also a few criminal types and terrorists aimed to destroying our system and way of life. There is a tremendous cost to us as taxpayers.

Unfortunately our government seems helpless to enforce immigration laws and secure our borders, and in effect is aiding and abetting this activity. What our your thoughts?

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Governor Doyle's recent budget address left a lot more questions than answers. He rather ignored the present \$1.6 Billion deficit as if it would go away by itself and instead

proposed a multitude of new spending proposals. He also repeated his promise not to increase sales or income taxes.

There has been a recent trend in the country for states to extort funds from business interests such as tobacco firms or Microsoft for general fund purposes. By proposing \$1.50 tax on "Big Oil" for each barrel of oil products sold in the state he has raised this method of taxation to a new level. It was not specified how this tax would apply, and if it would cover items such as heating oil, asphalt or what. Don't worry he said, it will be illegal for "Big Oil" to pass the tax on to consumers.

A similar scheme was tried recently in Connecticut. It was challenged in the courts and consumers ending up paying the tax. Any expense in the cost of fuel will immediately effect taxpayers in their own costs plus increased taxes for school buses, snow plows, and other municipal services. The cost of delivering everything we buy could be effected.

While we all blame "big oil" for the price of gasoline, their production costs are also rising dramatically due to other increasing costs. Truth is, they could probably sell all their products in other states and leave us dry if they wanted to. In the meantime Gov. Doyle will be forming new agencies to try attracting business to Wisconsin.

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Another controversial proposal by the Governor is a 1% tax on the gross proceeds of hospitals. While the hospitals in Wisconsin provide excellent care for their patients, they are not necessarily perceived as examples of efficient fiscal operation. Any increase in costs is quickly passed on to their patients.

While some hospitals could benefit from reimbursement from the federal government for Medicaid patients, others could lose. A problem is that a large percentage are Medicare patients who receive a set amount of reimbursement from Uncle Sam. Such an increase would have to be passed on to other patients. It seems futile to provide insurance benefits at government expense while at the same time increasing the cost of health care.

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All in all, the Governor pre-

sented far more spending proposals with undetermined price tags and higher taxes and fees for all which we will learn more about as work on the state budget proceeds. It may take a while for all of the details to be made public.

The entire budget document is 1,757 pages long. While the governor may claim the budget will not effect the average middle class citizen unless you continue smoking or big oil passes the tax on to consumers which could add 5 cents per gallon of gas. Considerably higher automobile registration and other fees plus allowing higher property taxes will also effect your pocketbook.

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Ethanol is being touted by many as a viable answer to independence from foreign oil. Production may be causing other problems to solve however.

First, the price of corn used to produce the stuff has about tripled in the past year due to higher demand. This may be great for corn producers, but not for farmers purchasing cattle feed, or consumers buying meat, dairy products, cereal or other products made from corn.

Production methods will undoubtedly improve, but it is reported that it takes as much fossil fuel energy to produce ethanol as you receive. This also includes growing and trucking raw materials. Governments are subsidizing production at taxpayer expense, and vehicle gas mileage can be less.

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The U.S. Mint has disclosed that in addition to losing money making pennies, it also costs over 7 cents for every nickel they produce. Maybe they should start having our money made in China like much of the other stuff we buy. One question is if the mission of the Mint is to produce coins which are circulated at face value, what is the advantage of producing millions of dollars worth of special issues which mostly are stashed away by collectors. Even Susan B. Anthony probably knew a business has to make a profit to exist.

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Gov. Doyle has had his way vetoing legislation or changing budget items to his own agenda. Maybe the state could save some money by doing

away with the legislature entirely.

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The Wisconsin Ethics Board reports the Taxpayer Protection Act, or TPA, (formerly TABOR), generated the most lobbyist activity in the 2006 legislative session, with a total of 14,750 hours reported by lobbyists doing their thing.

Of this total, 4,520 were by the Wisconsin Property Taxpayers PAC and 633 hours were reported by the Americans for Prosperity, which we assume spoke in the interests of taxpayers on this important issue.

The remaining 9,597 hours were from a hodge-podge of groups including WEAC, WI Prof. Police Assn., WI Counties Assn., WI Alliance of Cities, WI AFL-CIO, and others concerned with losing their livelihood and benefits. In other words, taxpayers were outspent 2 to 1 in this effort to place some controls on state spending.

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The Brown County Clerk reported a 21% turnout for the Feb. 20, primary which was great. The statewide average was only 7%. More important than the results are that a majority of voters express their opinions.

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The Dept. of Workforce Development just abandoned a \$23.6M computer system designed to track unemployment claims because they couldn't figure out how to work it and the Dept. of Revenue dumped a \$28.2M investment designed to track county sales tax collections for the same reason. Last year the UW system gave up on a \$26M computerized payroll system their brains couldn't use.

Check the first item in this "Things That Make Us Wonder." We wonder if there is some discrepancy in the sales taxes reported for our stadium district? A loss of \$140M taxable sales is a lot of business. One conclusion is that the people in Madison are suckers for a good computer salesman.

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The Postal Service has announced another hefty round of rate increases. Just a little over a year since the last big increase. This time they

didn't offer their usual excuses of increased costs, etc. Perhaps it was a loss of revenue due to more people and business making greater use of the internet.

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A Feb. 26, news article claims 1 of 6 people in the U.S. receive some sort of government aid. This seems like an extremely high number and speaks poorly of our economy. Add the 1 of 10 holding some sort of government job and we wonder who is paying all the bills.

In the meantime our political leaders call for lowering the standards to qualify for benefits and free health care for everybody. If this trend continues "rich" people will be on the endangered species list.

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, from the days news events. Some are relatively unimportant and probably not worth commenting about while 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 of 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."

"Congress is now trying to pass a bill that would require health insurance to cover more costs for the mentally ill. Once again, Congress is looking out for themselves;"
... Jay Leno

"Whenever you find your are on the side of the majority, it is time to pause and reflect." , , , Mark Twain

The TAX TIMES

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

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TAXPAYER SURVEY RESULTS ENCLOSED

Inside This Issue

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and more.

The TAX TIMES - March, 2007

BCTA Meeting and Events Schedule – MARK YOUR CALENDARS.

Thursday - March 15, 2007. BCTA Monthly Meeting. 12:00 Noon
TITLETOWN BREWING Co., 2D Floor Meeting Room
Speaker – Discussion of Current Taxpayer Interests.

Tuesday - April 3, 2007. General Spring Election.
Brown County Executive – State Supreme Court Justice
Various local elections. **BE SURE TO VOTE!**

Thursday - April 19, 2007. BCTA Monthly Meeting. 12:00 Noon
TITLETOWN BREWING Co., 2D Floor Meeting Room
Program to be announced.

Thursday - May, 17, 2007. BCTA Monthly Meeting. 12:00 Noon
TITLETOWN BREWING Co., 2D Floor Meeting Room
Program to be announced.

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

Meetings are open to the public.

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

COST” \$7.00, Payable at meeting. Includes lunch, tax & tip.
Call Jim Frink – 336-6410 for information or to leave message.



March, 2007

“Well, the election campaign in the country is picking up speed...All the candidates are talking about health care now. Don't they realize that it's their campaign speeches that makes us sick?” . . . **Bob Hope**

“Politics is the conduct of public affairs for private advantage.”
. . . **Ambrose Bierce**

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.