

Now the fun begins, said the fox.

"The unions have threatened to cost me my job." – sacked county HR chief, Mike Kwaterski, who got pink-slipped last month by County Exec. Tom Hinz.

"All of a sudden the unions have influence with the county executive? When did that happen? Every county executive has gotten rid of the human resources director." - Teamsters rep Mike Williquette

Williquette is right, they've all been fired, out of sight, out of mind. So what? The difference is the unions didn't really have a horse in this past election; they just had an enemy – Alan Lasee. When did the union get influence with the county executive? On April 4.

When pigs fly. Like it or not, Hinz owes them, and he has made what is being construed as a repayment gesture. We have to take Hinz on his word when he defended the move, "I don't base my decisions on things like that. I base them on what's best for the county and county government." But Kwaterski was very good for our county. I find it difficult to imagine someone better. And shuffling bureaucrats after every election flushes institutional memory for political reasons. And political reasons aren't even a good basis for deciding which side to butter your toast.

The public takes little notice of such, they all do it, right? We would like to know, which side is Executive Hinz's toast buttered on? We shall see most clearly when the size of the Mental Health Center staffing comes to fruition and I'm sure the tree will be loaded with goodies for all the supporters of a larger than required institution.

The summer is nigh and thoughts will go anywhere but politics. Can't blame anyone since I'd rather be at the lake too, but unless someone watches these items, we'll be in the water looking for a lifesaver.

As an aside, I attended the NWTC budget hearings just cause we need public bodies at these events. I felt all alone surrounded by NWTC badge carrying bodies, and with one exception a board which votes yes on everything. Secretary John Gower was the only voice for budget reduction based on CPI numbers. But hell only Social Security recipients need worry about that, let's vote a 4.7% increase. And they did. Just prepping everyone for next year's property tax bill.

Even though Memorial Day has past, a debt of gratitude is owed the men and women of our Armed Forces. Thank God for them.

Brown County Taxpayers Association.

Richard Parins, President

The BROWN COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION
Promoting Fiscal Responsibility in Government

CODE OF ETHICS FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICE.

Any person In Government service should:

1. Put loyalty to the highest moral principles and to country above loyalty to Government persons, party, or department.
2. Uphold the Constitution, laws, and legal regulations of the United States and all governments therein and never be a party to their evasion.
3. Give a full day's labor for a full day's pay; giving to the performance of his duties his earnest effort and best thought.
4. Seek to find and employ more efficient and economical ways of getting tasks accomplished.
5. Never discriminate unfairly by the dispensing of special favors or privileges by anyone, whether for remuneration or not; and never accept for himself or his family, favors or benefits under circumstances which might be construed by reasonable persons as influencing the performance of governmental duties.
6. Make no private promises of any kind binding upon the duties of office, since a Government employee has no private word which can be binding on public duty.
7. Engage in no business with the Government, either directly or indirectly, which is inconsistent with the conscientious performance of his governmental duties.
8. Never use any information coming to him in confidentiality in the performance of governmental duties as a means of making private profit.
9. Expose corruption wherever discovered.
10. Uphold these principles, ever conscious that public office is a public trust.

Taxpayers Network Inc.

"Only in America... do drug stores make the sick walk all the way to the back of the store to get their prescriptions while healthy people can buy cigarettes at the front."

. . . Only in America

"People never lie so much as after a hunt, during a war, or before an election."

. . . Otto von Bismarck

• A dangerous promise to Wisconsin's little 8th graders.

The Wisconsin Covenant. Kind of a spiritual sound to it, don't you think? Come to the mountaintop, do a couple of thou shalt not's, hit the books, and you're set

- It's great stuff. So Governor Doyle travels all over creation, parts the Red Sea and declares education for all.
- Normally, I would hardly notice this showmanship and posturing by the governor. But this Covenant business is upsetting. And here's why.
- First of all, this program of post-secondary education for everybody is by NO means a done deal. It's one piece of a huge budget *proposal* that would once again end in deficit, despite extraordinary proposed tax and fee increases. It hasn't hardly been discussed in Joint Finance, except long enough for the Committee to say "your plan is pretty sparse – please come back when you have more details."
- So come back they did. Recently, JFC co-chairs Rhoades and Decker received a letter from Secretary of Administration Morgan. Here are just some of the details.
- \$180,200 *annually* for 2 positions to establish the Office of the Wisconsin Covenant
- \$250,000 *annually* to "support ...training related to incorporating character education principles into [teachers'] daily instructional and administrative activities." [What?]
- From here on out, 20% increases in financial aid budgets, until the increase is from \$114M in the 2001-03 biennium to \$330M in the 2013-15 biennium. Yikes.

Read the letter yourself. Right down to the bottom where the student's principal is signing a checklist to verify he or she has met the Covenant's pledge. You tell me if this is Mickey Mouse stuff or not.

So Governor Doyle traipses around the state promising kids the moon. Kids who trust in what their Governor has to say

You know what's going to happen. Fiscally responsible legislators will say "It's a very nice program – but you know what? We've got some holes to dig out of – and it may not be something we can do right now."

Oh my. No more Red Sea parting – just a sink hole taking those guys straight to the underworld. Such bad guys to snatch a promise from these young, impressionable kids.

If Doyle were responsible and politically honest about this whole thing, he'd be offering Wisconsinites a choice:

"This Covenant program is great because Wisconsin trails most of the country when it comes to 4-year degrees

. . . "BUT – if you think this is really important, please help us decide what current program we should scale back to make room for it. We can do the Wisconsin Covenant if we provide WisconsinCare for only the 45,000 most needy seniors

Or, we can do the Wisconsin Covenant if the state no longer funds 2/3 of school extracurricular programs. Or if we increase UW tuition even further for today's college students, or...."

Well, you get the picture. A nice idea. Lots of nice, some even great, ideas out there. But we've got to make choices. And somebody should show a little more class to 8th graders by keeping his promises to himself until he knows he can deliver. And delivering is a path legislators need think long and hard about before they commence traveling it.

-Jo Egelhoff, FoxPolitics.net.

www.FpxPolitics.net

Clearing Up Tax Rank Confusion.

By Todd A. Berry, President, Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance. (WISTAX).

No question is asked more often of WISTAX researchers by the public and press than: How does Wisconsin's tax burden compare with other states? And no issue is more debated by partisans and interest group advocates at the State Capitol.

Two reliable tax rankings.

Based on the most recent national data available (fiscal year 2004) from the most commonly used source (U.S. Census Bureau), facts show that Wisconsin state and local taxes claimed 12.2% of personal income, the sixth-highest percentage in the nation. The U.S. average was 11.0%.

An equally useful ranking results if population, rather than income, is used. State-local taxes here totalled \$3,714 per capita in 2004, or 12th highest. The U.S. average was \$3,447. Because Wisconsin per capita income is below the national average, tax rankings based on population are generally lower than those based on income.

Taxes plus fees: 8th.

Where the confusion begins is that their rankings can be altered if other state or local government revenues are added to taxes. Because Wisconsin relies less on these sources than it does on taxes, including them lowers any state ranking.

For example, Wisconsin has no toll roads and lower college tuitions than many states. So, when fees paid for public services are added to taxes—a legitimate approach—the state's 2004 rank on the combined total was eighth (rather than sixth). Taxes and fees together claimed 15.3% of Wisconsin personal income, compared to 14.2% nationally.

Less-used revenues drop rank.

Still lower rankings are possible if funds from other less-used sources are included. By adding to taxes and fees miscellaneous government revenues from investment earnings, property sales, and special assessments, among others, the result is total revenues raised from all state and local sources, or what the Census calls "own-source" revenues.

In Wisconsin, own-source revenue accounted for 16.8% of personal income, 14th highest among the states. The national average was 16.0%. Some cite this as the Badger State's rank for taxes and fees paid; however, as noted, it includes items from sources other than taxes and fees.

Federal aid confuses picture.

One final ranking, often cited by those suggesting that Wisconsin taxes are not particularly high, further expands the definition of revenues. By including federal aid to Wisconsin governments, our 2004 revenues from all sources climbed to 21.2% of personal income vs. a national average of 20.6%. The Badger State has long ranked low in federal monies received, so adding them to state-local dollars pushed the state's overall revenue rank to 24th.

Similarly, Wisconsin ranked 21st on state-local spending. Total 2004 expenditures equaled 21.9% of personal income; the national average was 20.8%.

Income, property taxes matter.

For typical taxpayers, the confusion over total tax rankings probably misses the point. Many have trouble identifying

with an abstract percentage or rank based on many taxes or other revenues. But they readily know what they pay in property or income taxes.

In FY 2004, Wisconsin property taxes claimed 4.4% of personal income, eighth highest in the nation and well above the U.S. average of 3.5%. They required a larger share of income here than in any of the surrounding states: Illinois (4.2%, 11th highest); Iowa (3.8%, 16th); Michigan (3.8%, 17th); and Minnesota (2.8%, 36th).

At 3.1% of income vs. 2.4% nationally, the state income tax ranked ninth. Regionally, only Minnesota (7th, 3.3%) was higher than Wisconsin. Iowa (26th, 2.4%), Michigan (35th, 2.0%), and Illinois (38th, 1.7%) were all lower.

Taxpayers might not be able to recite these statistics, but they can "feel" their impact. If Wisconsinites view their taxes as high, it is due to personal experience. They compare their income and property tax bills here to what friends and relatives pay in other states, and they find that their payments are higher here than elsewhere. ??

The Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance, founded in 1932, is the state's oldest and most respected private government-research organization. Through its publications, civic lectures, and school talks, WISTAX aims to improve Wisconsin government through citizen education. Non-profit, nonpartisan, and independently funded, WISTAX is not affiliated with any group-national, state, or local—and receives no government support.

Poverty in Green Bay.

Much of the material we read in the local papers and see on television about Green Bay is very upbeat.

Unemployment is at a relatively low level, downtown development is proceeding, retail business is good, air traffic is up, the Packers are giving their players multi-million dollar contracts, new retail and manufacturing establishments are opening and visitors are flocking in to spend more money.

What is discouraging and indicates that things may not be so good is an article in the June 1, *Press-Gazette* which establishes that 46.4% of students in the Green Bay School District are eligible to receive free or subsidized school lunches because their family income is considered under the poverty level.

This number has grown from 36.29% in 2002, and is considerably higher than that of surrounding communities. While we certainly can't comment on the extent or cause of the problem, a number of things could be assumed.

First just because someone is employed does not mean they make enough money to support a family. Is our average wage that much less than comparable cities? Are 46.4% of our families also below the poverty level? Have our leaders concentrated too much on creating jobs in the service sector and not enough in the higher paying manufacturing and technological sector. Has immigration brought an influx of residents not qualified or able to qualify for higher paying jobs. Are more facilities in order to train and qualify workers?

While subsidizing school lunches is a relatively small expense, lower income families do not contribute income, property, sales or other taxes to the economy. This is a serious community problem effecting all of us.

JF

May Meeting Notes.

Monthly BC TA meeting May 17, 2007 at Titledown Brewing Co.

The Sustainable Growth Initial Report for the City of Green Bay was discussed. Concerns were expressed about the cost-effectiveness of some measures in the program and that some benefits are overstated while some costs are not recognized or not anticipated. It was observed that strategies to impede or inhibit vehicular traffic in downtown Green Bay appear to have nebulous benefits.

John Gower announced that the Northeast Wisconsin Technical College (NWTC) budget hearing is to be held at 4:00 p.m. on May 23 at the NWTC District Office on West Mason Street in Green Bay. The proposed budget carries a 4.7 percent property tax levy increase which is driven by a 7.9 percent increase in debt service costs. New bonding of \$8 million is proposed.

A BCTA position opposing the Governor's proposal to raise the annual property tax levy increase limit for units of local government from 2 percent to 4 percent was approved.

Richard Parins reviewed a *Wall Street Journal* column proposing that the Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT) be changed to a flat tax that would apply to more citizens. The revised AMT would provide a lower marginal tax rate and apply to more taxpayers. A potential flat tax benefit is that lower income citizens seeing large deductions disappear under the flat tax would realize that they are paying for a larger share of federal government programs, and then oppose the continued expansion of federal government programs. People with high incomes will not support creating more state and local government programs because they will not be able to deduct their state and local taxes from their income for federal tax purposes.

The next BCTA meeting will be an evening meeting at the Rock Garden on June 21 to recognize former County Executive Carol Kelso for her four years of holding down property taxes for Brown County citizens. This will be in lieu of our monthly business meeting at Titledown Brewing which will resume in July. Invitations to the Rock Garden will be mailed to BCTA members and guess. All interested parties will be welcome to attend.

The next Brown County Taxpayers meeting will be July 19, 2007 at Titledown Brewing. Details on the last Page of this *TAX TIMES*.

Dave Nelson – Secretary

“Heroes aren't athletes who set new sports records or Hollywood actors who make 'daring' films or politicians who make bold promises. Heroes are people who place themselves at risk for the benefit of others.”

. . . **Oliver North**

“You can easily judge the character of others by how they treat those who can do nothing for them or to them.”

. . . **Malcolm Forbes**

“In order to become the master, the politician poses as the servant.”

. . . **Charles de Gaulle**

Adding Injury to Insult.

The State of Wisconsin always shows great creativity in finding new sources of revenue to spend.

Could you imagine each county adding a \$5.00 fee for the privilege of having to timely pay your property taxes each year? Worse yet, could you imagine being compelled to access your own property, making all the mathematical calculations, and being subject to substantial fines if at some future time an auditor decides your calculations are in error?

Maybe the analogy is wrong, but that is exactly what the state (governor) has inserted in the budget for business establishments who submit their sales tax returns and remittances by the U.S. Mail rather than submit them electronically. They will be asked to remit an additional \$5.00 with their sales tax returns to the Dept. of Revenue.

While most of will say it is no big deal and won't effect them, it is calculated to put another million or so into the state treasury. The people who will pay it are the very small merchants who do not necessarily have the need or expertise to use electronic fund transfers in their business. Collecting and reporting the sales tax is part of doing business, but in many cases it is a nuisance and an expense to those compelled to collect it.

When the tax was first initiated in 1962, it only applied to so-called “luxury” items such as automobiles, sporting goods, restaurant meals, furniture and the like. Retailers had to keep track of the sales of these items, and collect the then 3% tax. They could keep 2% of collections for their trouble.

It didn't take long to add clothing, services, and other items to the taxed list, then raise the tax to 4% and then 5%.

The state also cut the discount to 1% and the present 1/2%. Their next slap at retailers was to compel payment to the state of the previous months collection by the 20th of the following month for those collecting \$1,000 or more monthly. While this created a one time windfall for the state, retailers have been forced to total up their sales, categorize exempt sales and sales to taxable counties and make remittance in full in 20 days. Check it out. Can you imagine any government unit doing anything in 20 days? Their auditors assure compliance.

While most of us are used to paying sales tax on most everything we buy at retail, and many business's tax all their sales, many establishments such as wholesalers or mail order houses, hardware stores, etc. have a whole set of exemptions to track. This includes sales for resale, items used or consumer in manufacturing, exclusive use in farming, sales to exempt organizations and government units. When the sales tax laws were written, political pressure allowed certain exemptions which remain in effect to this day. It is largely left up to the retailers to enforce the law, collect and remit the tax.

In other words, business establishments, many of them small operations are charged with collecting the tax, administering the law and timely reporting to the Dept. of Revenue. Now they are being charged a fee to do so. In the meantime, retailers who sell the state lottery tickets get to keep 5% of their sales plus a bonus if they sell a winning ticket.

Charging extra to file returns under any circumstances is an audacious insult to the business people of Wisconsin.

Jim Frink – BCTA

"INVEST IN WISCONSIN KIDS" TAX CREDIT PLAN INTRODUCED. *Initiatives Would Raise Public and Private School Funds through Donations.*

Three Northeastern Wisconsin legislators unveiled a plan to provide tax credits for educational expenses at public and private schools, as well as incentives for businesses who donate to school scholarship funds.

Representatives Phil Montgomery, Karl Van Roy, and John Nygren unveiled their "Invest in Wisconsin Kids" plan with a group of education supporters, including Green Bay Mayor Jim Schmidt, Diocese of Green Bay Bishop David A. Zubik, and former Assembly Speaker John Card.

"We're introducing a proposal that will truly put families first," said Montgomery. "Wisconsin has an opportunity to continue its leadership role in bringing affordable education to all families."

The proposal would provide tax credits for families' educational expenses, including those who pay tuition at independent schools—meaning more families can afford to send their children to the school that best fits their needs.

"Invest in Wisconsin Kids" follows a 1999 law passed by the Illinois state legislature, which enacted a state income tax credit for educational expenses, including tuition, and book and lab fees incurred on behalf of a K-12 student in a public or private school. New York and Minnesota also have long-standing traditions of tax credits for educational expenses. "We're looking at a win-win situation here," said Nygren. "Parents will have more resources to provide their kids with the education that's right for them. This is an initiative that encourages a greater investment in education for our kids."

The second feature of the proposal will provide tax credits to businesses that contribute to scholarship funds set-up at both public and private schools.

Three states—Arizona, Pennsylvania, and Florida—already have laws in place providing tax credits to businesses that donate to scholarship funds. In Florida, the non-partisan Collins Center for Public Policy estimated that the Corporate Tax Credit Scholarship Program could result in a \$600 million increase in statewide net revenue available for education over the next 10 years.

"Providing tax credits to companies that contribute to scholarship funds is a fantastic way to encourage investment in our state's brightest young minds and our next generation of employees," said Van Roy. "This plan will help more students get the education they may not otherwise be able to afford."

When questioned as to if public schools would object to the state tax credits being used for the benefit of private schools, it was stated that this will benefit public schools as well. This proposal is not just about private schools. In the 89th district and throughout the state we have declining enrollment schools and tight budgets. School boards are faced with making tough decisions every day. Often on the chopping block are vocational educational and school-to-work programs. At the same time we have a shortage of skilled workers throughout the state. Busi-

ness is looking for an opportunity to partner with public K-12 schools to better prepare for the workforce of the future.

The legislators indicated they hope to see the plan included in the State's 2007-2009 biennial budget, and will be introducing the tax credit proposals for legislative review.

Analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau

This bill creates an income and franchise tax credit for businesses that contribute to a scholarship-granting organization or to an educational improvement organization. The amount of the credit is equal to 75 percent of the contribution, but the amount of the credit may not exceed \$200,000 in any taxable year.

Under the bill, a scholarship-granting organization is a nonprofit entity that contributes at least 80 percent of its annual receipts to scholarship programs for pupils in grades kindergarten to 12 at private or public schools in this state.

Under the bill, an educational improvement organization is a nonprofit entity that contributes at least 80 percent of its annual receipts as grants to public schools for innovative educational programs.

This bill also creates a nonrefundable individual income tax credit for amounts spent by a claimant, for the claimant's dependent child, on eligible education expenses at public schools, private schools, or charter schools for grades kindergarten to 12. Because the credit is nonrefundable, no refund is paid if the amount of the credit exceeds the taxpayer's tax liability.

Under the bill, education expenses include amounts that are spent for tuition, books, and other educational materials or supplies that are purchased by a claimant in the year to which the claim relates and that are related to the pupil's curricular activities and attendance at an eligible institution.

The maximum credit that may be claimed under the bill is \$2,500 per year if the claimant files as a single individual, head of household, or married person filing separately. The maximum credit that may be claimed under the bill is \$5,000 per year if the claimant is a married person filing a joint return.

The amount of credit that may be claimed by a nonresident or part-year resident of this state is modified based on the ratio of the claimant's Wisconsin adjusted gross income (AGI) to his or her federal AGI.

For further information see the state fiscal estimate, which will be printed as an appendix to this bill.

"I have always maintained that no President can be as bad as the men that advise him. We don't need a different man as bad as we need different advisors for the same man."
... Will Rogers

"Sometimes politicians get things upside down. They ignore problems that are plainly staring them in the face; while focusing on dangers that are at best speculative."
... Michael Barone

Oil Tax in Fantasyland: Deal or No Deal?

That low, rumbling sound you hear is the slow, steady march of the Joint Finance Committee toward the inevitable vote on the transportation budget, which includes the brand new oil franchise fee (gas tax).

“Oil Franchise Fee” is Madison-speak for “new Democrat gas tax that will hit the pumps just in time for all your summer travels, making it less likely that you can afford to go anywhere or do anything fun this summer, so I hope you have a good air conditioner since you will be watching Deal or No Deal reruns all summer long”.

Whether or not Joint Finance is going to take the new gas tax out of the budget remains to be seen. In the mean time, I think the new gas tax deserves a closer look for one main reason. Of all the things the Governor promised in this budget, this is the one that is most obviously not true (except maybe telling us that you can add tens of thousands of new recipients to Medicaid and that it won't cost us a dime more).

The Governor told us that, “It will be illegal for [oil companies] to pass the [oil franchise] fee on to consumers” during his budget address earlier this year. Wow, that sounds great! Tax money from the “evil” oil companies with no impact on our price at the pump.

Does anyone really believe that? Actually, there are two things there that are completely unbelievable.

Number 2: That you could tax an industry and expect that industry to stay in business and not pass the extra cost on to consumers; and

From the Home Office in Wahoo, Nebraska, the number one most unbelievable thing about the new gas tax in the Governor's budget address – he said it without laughing, winking or in any other way acknowledging how utterly ridiculous his assertion that everyday people would not see a price increase at the pump after his new gas tax went into effect.

The Governor should head out to the World Series of Poker this summer. With a poker face like that, even Madison's own Poker Brat, former champion Phil Helmuth, would not be able to beat him. Maybe he could donate his winnings to the state to make up for all the overspending, taxing and borrowing we are going to have to do to pay for the Democrats' budget.

It didn't take long for someone to try to debunk the Governor's claims so that the members of the Joint Finance Committee could know what the **actual effect on consumers is going to be** before they vote to include it in the budget. The Wisconsin Policy Research Institute did a study on the new gas tax. The Executive Summary of their report states:

“This report examines this proposed new tax from a variety of perspectives all of which suggest the new tax simply cannot work in the way the Governor has described. The report includes an economic refresher showing that, if the no-pass-through feature stays, markets will adjust to the added cost and (they will ship our gas someplace else where they can make more money) and pump prices will rise. There is nothing nefarious about this phenomenon; it is the way a free market works.

The report also identifies the no-pass-through feature for what it is: a cost control. The federal government and a few

states have tried to control the price of gasoline. In every instance, the results were the opposite of what was intended. Most recently, Hawaii scrapped its cost control after just eight months when it discovered that prices were actually higher after the controls were implemented than they were before.

A legal review shows that the new tax is built on shaky legal ground. Similar no-pass-through provisions have been found to be a violation of the Commerce Clause of the U.S. Constitution.”

So, there are three pretty important reasons to believe that the Governor may have been telling a fish tale when he said we wouldn't feel his new gas tax at the pump. Number one, the free market doesn't work that way, even in Governorland; two, cost controls do not work and three, the U.S. Constitution says that the Governor is wrong.

Once you get past all that (you know, immutable laws of economics, history and the United States Supreme Court), it sounds like a good plan.

When will someone (other than WPRI) hold the Governor accountable for this tall tale? Are the Senate Democrats going to stand up for consumers or are they going to let the Governor tack on a five cent a gallon tax onto our already high gas prices? Will any Democrat in the state call this proposal what it is - an increased sale tax on everyone who drives in our state.

Sometimes it is hard to understand the effect of legislation before it passes. That is not the case with the new gas tax. Every gallon you put in your tank will cost a nickel more than the day before the Democrats started taxing it. It isn't like we aren't paying gas taxes already, some of the highest in the nation.

Between the free market, the failure of cost controls and the fact that making it illegal to pass this tax on to consumers is probably unconstitutional the Governor and the Democrats have three strikes. When is someone going to call them out?

Representative Frank G. Lasee

National Debt Update.

On June 1, the publicized National Debt reached a total of **\$8,833,107,507,863.13**, or only about \$12 Billion more than it was back on May 1. We say “only” because to no ones real surprise, it is being disclosed that the debt is probably much, much worse than what has been officially disclosed.

Corporations are compelled to enter an expense as a payable item when it is incurred. This includes retirement costs, lease agreements and other long term debt. The Government operates on a modified cash system, only adding as debt the difference between what they actually spend and receive as revenue during a given period of time. Their actual loss for 2006 was about \$1.3 Trillion but they only added \$248 Billion to the debt.

If all of the liabilities for Social Security, Medicare, unfunded pension liabilities, interest and the like were added up, it is estimated the true National Debt would be \$59.1 Trillion.

This amounts to \$516,348 for every U.S. household on top of the average household debt of \$112,043 for mortgages, car loans and other debt.

In the meantime the President and Congress keep thinking of ways to spend more money.

What's happening in Downtown Green Bay?

By Harry Maier

There's a two-fold answer to that question.

A lot has happened, a lot more will be happening. For this report, "downtown" will include both sides of the Fox River, mainly along North Washington street and Broadway.

Here's what has happened in the Washington Street area from the standpoint of new investment:

- **Quality Inn and Suites, formerly the Downtowner Motel, \$1.5 million**
- **Johnson Bank, \$4.5 million.**
- **St. Brenden's Inn, \$3.6 million**
- **Alexander Apartments, converted to condominiums, \$2 million.**
- **Bellin Building improvements, \$1.5 million**
- **Nicolet National Bank, \$12 million.**
- **River Lofts Condominiums, \$10 million**
- **Baylake Bank, \$6 million**
- **APAC, \$2 million (estimated)**
- **Days Inn, \$1.1 million .**
- **Meyer Theatre, \$8 million**
- **Astor Place, \$33.2 Million**

That adds up to about \$85 million in new investment in our downtown area. The total current value of real estate on in the Washington St., and Broadway development areas is in excess of \$150 million, which includes a total of \$63.7 million which has been added to the tax rolls through new development.

Most important, however, is the number of people who have been brought into the area through this development. City planners have estimated the number to be in the area of 2,000 with many more on the way.

Moving to Broadway, the nonprofit "On Broadway Inc." was formed in 1995. At that time, the district had an assessed valuation of \$29 million. In 2005, the last year for which figures are available, the assessed valuation had risen to \$70 million.

Now, what's ahead?

For North Washington street, the primary work will be directed at the site of the former Younkers Department Store. The city just turned over the keys to the building to John Vetter and his development team.

We can expect major construction to begin this summer, with the work divided into two phases, one with a value of about \$23 million, the other \$10 million.

The project will include condominiums, rental units, offices, retail, restaurants, parking and the Children's Museum, the latter occupying 15,000 square feet of space on the building's first floor.

This fall, it is expected construction could begin on the 17-story Astor Place, a condominium structure at a cost of \$33.2 million.

On Broadway expected to close on the purchase of the Larsen building June 1. We could see work beginning on razing

of the corner property that same month.

This is a 22-acre site between Broadway and the Canadian National Railroad tracks, Dousman and Mather streets

On Broadway is looking at this as the start of a 10-year development project at a value that could top \$105 million.

On top of all of that, work is proceeding with site preparation and design plans for waterfront development along the east side of the river between the Walnut and Ray Nitschke bridges.

Actual construction will begin in the spring of 2008 at a cost of about \$12 million.

The city also has done its share with construction of the 800-vehicle capacity parking structure in the 100 block of North Washington.

Work could begin on a number of projects during 2007-08 marking the largest construction period in the history of Downtown Green Bay.

Harry Maier, Chairman Green Bay Redevelopment Authority.

Wisconsin's gas prices could be the highest in the nation!

As we know by now, there are all sorts of reasons for the price of gas, but one big one is state gas taxes. Below are a few prices at the pump from (AAA/CBSNEWS/AP) on June 4, for regular gasoline.

Georgia	3.035
*Countrywide Avg	3.158
*Wisconsin	3.375
California	3.378
Illinois	3.459

At \$.33/gallon, Wisconsin's gas tax is the third highest in the nation. Second only to the states of New York, at .3865 and Washington, which will increase to \$.36/gallon July 1 of this year. (The nationwide average is \$.22/gallon.)

IF Governor Doyle's tax on Big Oil is passed and IF the tax is deemed constitutional (a big IF), the "cockamamie" scheme couldn't be enforced says Richard Pomp, a Univ. of Connecticut law professor. That scheme of course, is the "Big Oil" tax that Doyle will "prohibit" (with criminal penalties!) the oil companies from passing on to consumers. Yeah, right.

And to do all this mastering, the governor has included dollars in the budget to hire more auditors. If the tax is ruled unconstitutional, the tax with interest can be refunded to oil companies — or the tax can simply be forwarded on to the consumer, without all the smoke and mirrors of auditors and pretending consumers won't pay. In spite of what the governor and his people are saying, there's no way we should ignore that .07/gallon tax that experts say will be the *real result* of the Doyle 2.5% tax on "Big Oil. Net result, taxes of \$.40/gallon in Wisconsin, the highest gas tax in the land.

When you hear your representatives complain about gas prices, ask how much of that price is taxes. Then ask them how much of those taxes that were supposed to pay for building roads was stolen to fund other programs in the General Fund. Now that's a whole second story? **Jo Egelhoff – FoxPolitics.net**

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Things That Make Us Wonder.

One of the items tucked away in the 2007-08 state budget is a proposal to increase the advertising budget for the state lottery from \$4.6 million to \$7.5 million annually. Their theory is that if more people knew about the lottery the state could realize an additional \$15 Million in lottery profits each year.

If this were true, why don't they invest the entire state budget in lottery advertising and double it? They could then eliminate other taxes, spend what they want on schools and have money left over for a "rainy day fund."

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E-Coli contamination on Lake Michigan and Green Bay beaches have been a major concern during the past several years. While the exact cause has not been identified, a recent article in the *Journal-Sentinel* suggested that storm sewers entering Lake Michigan in the Milwaukee area could be a source. The problem is sanitary sewers leaking into the storm sewers. The DNR is also busy trying to find the source of a virus that is causing various species of fish to bleed to death in many of our lakes, including Lake Michigan.

We are fortunate that our local and state engineers monitor this situation as Lake Michigan is or will soon be the source of potable water for the Green Bay area as well as most other cities bordering on the lake.

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This is probably more of a patriotic than a taxpayer issue, but since paying taxes is considered a patriotic duty it is worth comment.

Although not NASCAR fans, we recently watched the beginning of a recent race. We were impressed that they found time to televise a short prayer followed by an impressive playing and singing of our National Anthem prior to the start of the program.

What makes us wonder is why the NFL, enjoying a huge fan base and popularity often uses this part of the program to feed us more commercials? Even those originating in the heart of America, Green Bay. We realize everyone may not

agree and this is a league decision. We can't speak for other sports but it seems that if the *Star Spangled Banner* is part of the program it should be presented to the audience at home as well as those in the stands. There will still be plenty of time for commercials.

* * * * *

There are a couple of items pre-occupying the Green Bay City Council and Brown County Board bringing us attention from the rest of the state and even beyond,

First are the ordinances establishing where paroled sex offenders may reside. If the state sees fit to release these individuals to society, is it the responsibility of a community to comply with any mandates? If not, it would seem that we should be dealing with state officials and let them come up with a equitable solution based on individual circumstances. If they believe an individual is ready to return to society, they should be taking more responsibility.

* * * * *

The other item is a proposed ordinance to refuse a city license to establishments hiring undocumented, or illegal aliens. No one seems to know how many illegal immigrants are living in this area but estimates are in the thousands. In addition to creating additional expense to taxpayers through increased police, medical care, education and welfare costs it has complicated our national security.

One problem with this ordinance may be that not all types of business operations in the city require a city license in order to operate. The real problem is there are federal laws regulating immigration but it seems they have not been enforced. Is there any other country in the world where one can clandestinely cross the border at you discretion, set up residency and receive the benefits of citizenship without going through the proper channels?

If the federal government enforced their laws conceivably there would be no problems. There are rules governing the number and origin of immigrants. There are provisions for workers, students, and those with a legitimate reason to live here for extended periods

of time and for tracking their whereabouts while in our country.

More important, there are well established regulations requiring employers to verify citizenship by verifying a social security card, birth certificate, passport and drivers license. If an employer deducts wages as a cost of doing business, they must furnish the Social Security and name of each and every employee and they MUST add up. It is then the responsibility of the Social Security Administration to post wages to your unique account and question any discrepancy such as names or incorrect numbers. This should be no problems with today's computers.

Thanks to the IRS there are serious penalties for falsifying tax returns or employee records. It is somewhat apparent that illegal immigrants have perfected methods of using false identifications to obtain employment and other benefits of U.S. citizenship.

While employers must take some of the blame for knowingly hiring illegal workers, it would seem the various government agencies should get their act together as just about everyone agrees we have a problem.

Rather than go after the little fish perhaps we should call in Sen. Kohl and Feingold and Rep. Kagen and ask why the government agencies under their direction aren't doing their job.

* * * * *

There are many advocates of offering amnesty as a solution to the illegal immigrant problem. This has been tried at least twice in recent history with mixed success. One problem is that many of those offered amnesty are afraid they will be deported anyone, and don't report. The other is that people will still enter the country illegally because they believe amnesty will be offered again. This still does not solve the problem of terrorists or criminals moving in.

While we all may empathize with those who want a better way of life, you don't just move into your neighbors house because it is nicer than yours.

* * * * *

So far the illness and death of many pets around the country has been traced to pet food manufactured and imported from China. Hopefully this prob-

lem will be resolved shortly.

Perhaps more disturbing is that we already import just about every manufactured item that we use or wear from China already. We always wondered how with a population five times that of ours they could produce sufficient food for their own use. Now they are exporting pet food to us.

* * * * *

Governor Doyle (and previous administrations) have left no stone unturned in finding new things to tax or taxes to raise.

Somehow Wisconsin's beer tax has remained the same at \$2.00 per barrel for 37 years, but now it is proposed to increase it 500% to \$10.00 per. Unfortunately the price of a glass of beer is already 2 or 3 times what it was 37 years ago. When a tax increase can be hidden and passed on to a retail customer, it usually means a considerable price increase for the consumer. It is estimated to generate about \$40 million a year for the state: "to be used for alcohol abuse prevention." Something like the cigarette tax is used to discourage smoking.

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One fee increase that won't make much money is a provision to raise elk hunting permits from \$49 to \$75 for residents and \$251 to \$400 for non-residents. Only problem is so far there haven't been enough elk in the state to authorize hunting them so the licenses won't be sold soon by the DNR at any price.

* * * * *

We must have our priorities all wrong when issues like health care, national defense, terrorism, foreign affairs, the cost of energy, pollution, diversity, the environment, taxes, education, illegal immigration, the economy, fighting crime and a few more items occupy our minds and the headlines. At the same time the most important determining qualification for our new president to some people will be his or her stand on the subject of abortion or same sex marriages.

* * * * *

Dredging of the Fox River to remove/and or cap contaminants is under way with an estimated total cost as high as \$400 million. Apparently there will still be questions to be answered as the work

progresses. We will have to trust the engineers who established the necessity and methodology of this immense project to do the right thing, as there are a lot of things you can do with \$400 million of taxpayer and private money.

One estimate states that 22,000 yards of sediment; or about 1,000 truck loads will be shipped this summer to a landfill near Detroit. Does anyone know how much it would cost to send a truck load of worthless sludge from Green Bay to southern Michigan to be dumped?

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The DNR has noticed that even the lakes in Madison have been showing signs of pollution. After checking for sources, they noticed that a coal heating plant for the University of Wisconsin had been washing coal dust from a storage pile into storm sewers which emptied into Lake Monona.

The DNR has ordered the UW to stop the practice, or face a fine of \$10,000 per day. Maybe a UW degree in environmental control should be a prerequisite to operate their heating system.

* * * * *

It's bad enough that the price of gasoline keeps rising through the roof and there is not much you or I can do about it. Complicating the matter are the high gas taxes we pay due in part to automatic increases through indexing.

The 2007-08 state budget calls for a tax on oil co. profits which could add another nickel or more to the price we pay at the pump.

While Gov. Doyle may feel justified in punishing the oil companies for their "excessive" profits it was reported that the Badger State retirees pension fund has extensive holdings in oil stocks. During the past 4 years these stocks earned almost \$400 million in capital gains plus \$207 million in dividends. Sort of like biting the hand that feeds you. Don't be surprised if the Gov. has to find something else to tax to make up for the loss to the state employees pension fund.

* * * * *

While we all struggle with the price of gas, a station in Merrill offered senior citizens a 2 cent a gallon discount as a promotion. When the state dept. of

consumer protection found out about it they ordered him to stop the practice or face fines because the operator was violating Wisconsin's fair markup laws. In other words, it may be legal to charge as much as you want for a product but don't get caught selling for less than the guy down the street.

* * * * *

The Milwaukee Public Museum is a state treasure and probably one of the best in the country based on the quality of its exhibits.

Through poor fiscal management they have managed to get themselves about \$40 million in debt and could even face bankruptcy.

At present, their management is looking for naming right sponsors as a solution to their problem. Perhaps in the future this will be a source of revenue for everything from schools to prisons. So far it has worked well in financing sporting venues and various events.

* * * * *

Governor Doyle's plan to guarantee eighth graders admission and subsidies to state colleges when they are ready sounds good, but like a lot of good ideas it would have to be paid for. The estimated cost has been put at \$139 million for the first six years of operation.

* * * * *

Like many well-meaning government units, Milwaukee requires that any purchasing contract in excess of \$30 thousand meet guidelines assuring the contractor pays its workers a decent wage with adequate working conditions.

Problem is all of the affidavits, inspections and red tape involved were adding extra cost and delays in completing orders for needed supplies. They are looking at hiring a compliance officer for \$40-\$60,000 plus benefits just to do the extra paperwork.

* * * * *

In last falls gubernatorial election, Gov. Doyle and his supporters made a big issue of his opponent, Mark Green transferring over \$450,000 from his federal to his state election fund. Doyle called it "dirty money," and made it a cornerstone of his campaign.

Whether this affair effected the outcome of the election is a matter of



speculation, but it was certainly a good example of partisan politics as practiced in Wisconsin.

Now six months later the state supreme count has ruled the transfer of funds was perfectly legal and complied with accepted practices.

We wonder if the governor has apologized yet.

* * * * *

For years Wisconsin has had a \$3 a ton state tipping fee for dumping waste in a landfill. This was much lower than neighboring states and as a result they have been shipping millions of tons of trash here each year. It then becomes our problem. Trouble is many of our landfills are becoming full. The state budget calls for a \$4.60 per ton increase but that is still considered cheap. Another problem is our communities will also pay the increased cost and we will still have to keep finding new places to dump our garbage.

Somehow it would make sense to charge other states a lot more if we keep taking their garbage and forget about the taxing the "big oil" companies on their profits which will only be passed on to Wisconsin consumers.

* * * * *

The recent death of Ben Sonnenberg was an unfortunate incident with no real satisfactory explanation. We note there have been a number of recent incidents involving unlawful use of firearms and knives in the city, perhaps due to an influx of gangs and hoodlums. People are frightened and expect protection by our law enforcement agencies from these dangerous elements. The police in turn can properly assume that any suspicious person is armed and threatening.

Perhaps if nothing else this will serve notice to these elements that our police dept. will not tolerate unlawful activity endangering guns, knives, and their own safety and the rights and safety of law abiding citizens.

* * * * *

Some people say electric automobiles will be the answer to the energy shortage because all you have to do is plug them into an electric outlet to recharge them.

If this is such a great idea, there

may be some conflict between people with electric cars and those proposing we all start using fluorescent light bulbs in place of incandescent to save electricity.

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The Green Bay Board of Education has announced plans to lease surplus classroom space from parochial schools for kindergarten and head start classes. While this may be only a temporary solution, it makes good use of available space and be less expensive than new construction.

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The University of Wisconsin publicity Dept. has been hard at work to establish that their instructors are underpaid and as a result have been leaving by the busload to accept jobs.

This may be a problem and we don't deny the UW System is an important if not expensive asset to the state.

However, they could possibly get more sympathy from taxpayers if they put the emphasis of their woes on how busy their work schedules are, how much time they spend with students and their teaching records.

* * * * *

With the next state budget supposed to go into effect July 1, it seems the Legislature has been more preoccupied with a proposed state smoking ban.

Meanwhile, legislative committees have been busy seeing that certain more controversial budget items such as the profit tax on "big oil" companies remain intact.

Sort of like hiding your real activities behind a smoking screen.

* * * * *

So far the immigration reform bill supported by Pres. Bush leaves a lot of questions unanswered. Lawmakers from both the right and left are either in favor or opposed for a number of different reasons. Even a poll by the New York Times/CBS News adds confusion.

While they claim "broad support" for the major provisions, most respondents believe illegal immigration is a major and there is little support for amnesty. Allowing worker programs was supported. This is too important an issue to cover with hasty or ineffective legislation.

* * * * *

First a UW-Madison power plant was cited for violating the Clean Water Act by allowing coal dust runoff to drain into Lake Monona. Now the DNR claims they have been violating the Clear Air Act., which could carry fines of \$25,000 per day if not corrected.

They overhauled the plant in 2004, but failed to obtain a construction permit which would have required them to install technology which would have reduced emissions by 60% or more

* * * * *

Prodded by state and local governments who claim the loss of sales tax revenue, Congress is again considering ways to collect sales tax on E-mail sales. The states claim they are being forced to raise other taxes as a result.

At present there is a moratorium on requiring internet sales taxes which expires Nov. 1, 2007. Proposals are to let this expire, and either require internet retailers to collect the tax and deal with the hundreds of state and local taxing jurisdictions or have the federal government enforce a "Streamlined Sales Tax Agreement" to handle tax collections.

There is also talk of allowing states to tax internet access fees the same as other telephone taxes.

Many states, including Wisconsin have what is called a "Use Tax", requiring purchasers of taxable property on which they hadn't paid the required sales tax to remit on their own to the state or as a part of their income tax returns. Somehow, this requirement is often ignored.

* * * * *

Remember a few years ago the Brown County Board of Supervisors was downsized from 36 to the present 26 members. Although it was acknowledged that supervisors would have to spend more committee and personal time the idea was to form a more efficient working structure.

The Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance reports that in 2006, 7 of the 10 largest county boards in the entire country were still located in Wisconsin. In 2006, a new law (Act 100) was passed making it easier for counties to reduce the size of their boards, and as a result a number of counties have reduced the size of their boards accordingly, including Fond du

Lac from 36 to 18, Douglas from 28 to 7, and Wood from 38 to 19. It must have been a good idea.

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 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.”

Thank you Carol Kelso.

The Brown County Taxpayers Association is sponsoring a dinner recognizing County Executive Carol Kelso for her dedication and service to the taxpayers of Brown County. We have sent invitations to all BCTA members and interested parties. However, in the event you did not receive this invitation or know of anyone else who may be interested, here is the information.

DATE: Thursday, June 21, 2007
PLACE: Rock Gardens, 1951 Bond St., Green Bay
TIME: Cash Bar 6:30 P.M.
 Dinner 7:00 P.M.
PRICE: \$15.00 Per person.

Special Guest and Speaker —
Scott Walker — Milwaukee County Executive.

R.S.V.P. by June 14.

Any questions call Jim Frink, 336-6410
 or Bev VanDeurzen, 432-3916
 (This event will replace our regular monthly meeting.)

JOIN THE BCTA. If you are not now a member of the Brown County Taxpayers Association, or know of anyone who would be interested in joining, simply complete and return the attached. Dues are only \$12.00 per year for an individual, and include the TAX TIMES, and a voice in how your local, state, and federal tax dollars are spent.

Detach and Mail to: **BROWN COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION, P. O. Box 684, Green Bay, WI 54305-0684**

Membership Application/information form: **Date:** _____

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY/ZIP: _____

Individual Membership	\$12.00	\$	_____
Family Membership	\$20.00	\$	_____
Business/Corporate Membership	\$25.00	\$	_____
TOTAL ENCLOSED		\$	_____

(Make checks payable to Brown County Taxpayers Association.)

Committees of special interest:

Schools _____ County _____ Municipal _____ Federal _____ Publicity _____

Thank you!

The TAX TIMES

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

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Inside This Issue

Now the fun begins, said the fox.
Code of Ethics for Government Service.
A dangerous promise to Wisconsin's little 8th graders.
Clearing Up Tax Rank Confusion.
Poverty in Green Bay.
May Meeting Notes.
Adding Injury to Insult.
"Invest in Wisconsin Kids" Tax Credit Plan Introduced.
Oil Tax In Fantasyland: Deal or No Deal?
National Debt Update.
What's Happening in Downtown Green Bay?
Wisconsin's gas prices could be the highest in the nation.
Things That Make Us Wonder.
Thank you Carol Kelso.
Join The BCTA.

and more.

The TAX TIMES - June, 2007

BCTA Meeting and Events Schedule – MARK YOUR CALENDARS.

Thursday - June 21, 2007. "Thank you Carol Kelso Dinner."
6:30 P.M., Rock Gardens, 1951 Bond St., Green Bay
Special guest and speaker – Scott Walker, Milwaukee County Executive.
Price – \$15.00 Person.
Please send in your reservation by June 14.
(Note: This event will be in lieu of our regular Monthly Meeting.)
Call Jim Frink, 336-6410 or Bev VanDeurzen, 432-3916 if any question.

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

Thursday - August 16, 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.

June, 2007



"We're the land of the free for one reason only: We're also the home of the brave." . . . Peter Collier

"Politics is a strife of interests masquerading as a contest of principles." . . . 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.

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.