

"There he goes again..."

Ronald Reagan's famous riposte burst involuntarily from my mouth as I read about Big Jim McGovern's latest plan to engorge his turgid bureaucracy - research and development tax credits known as Innovate Wisconsin.

His heart is in the right place, it always is with Big Daddy Government types, but he ignores the fact that it is Government that keeps businesses out of Wisconsin. Why would he believe that more of it would lure businesses into our state? To ply yet another quip of *Ronaldus Magnus*, "government is not the solution to the problem, government is the problem." Putting out fire with gasoline; gas is wet, it should work, right?

Less government will lure businesses and jobs, not more, not the paltry fives and tens our Governor dangles out there. He's welcome to offer his own money, but not ours. Besides, he's already spent it.

Gov. Doyle spent 2001 and 2002 convincing voters that he could cut 10-12,000 state workers off the state payroll. He never came close. Then he tried to spin that his original intention was to make those cuts by the end of his second term. Baloney! Wrong way, Mr. "BadgerCare Plus." Emphasis on the "Plus."

Doyle loves his chubby, clubby bureaucracy, just as he loves his Frankenstein Veto. Do you think his perspective changed when he moved across the hall into 115 East? He can see Monona Terrace now, the bright icon of private business conventioning. State Government is now his private domain - Wisconsin Inc., Chairman and CEO Jim Doyle.

Doyle even invented a diabolical new form of pork. He takes economic development grants intended to boost private business and gives them to local governments in districts of Democratic lawmakers, so locals won't have to budget economic development funds.

Diamond Jim's fiscal legerdemain trims Fifty Grand here and there off county property tax levies, big deal! The bureaucratic waste is astounding!

And Innovate Wisconsin offers new local property tax exemptions. According to the latest Dept. of Revenue report [*SUMMARY OF TAX EXEMPTION DEVICES, Feb. 2007*, <http://www.revenue.wi.gov/ra/07sumrpt.pdf>], exempt business property already shorts locals of \$17.7 billion a year, not to mention the \$22.5 billion in property exemptions for churches, schools, hospitals, retirement homes and other properties deemed to have a public benefit. I am baffled since Sen. Dave Hansen's "Corporate Tax Accountability Act" seems to say we are not taxing businesses enough, and last time I checked these fellows were joined at the hip, politically speaking, of course.

But if Gov. Doyle really wanted to lure businesses into Wisconsin, he would not offer development grants, tax credits or even tax cuts. He would axe the corporate income tax altogether! No more baffling corporate tax code to administer or comply with. Hallelujah! The Promised Land! Can you imagine the buzz in the boardroom?

Corporations are essentially personal income generators. Treat them that way. Tax the personal incomes they generate to provide government services, but leave businesses free to generate income.

What revenue is lost, if it really needs to be replaced, can be done through cuts to state bureaucracy, especially all those wasteful, duplicitous business incentive programs run by the Dept. of Commerce. And after those cuts are accounted, ask a grateful WMC and NFIB what untaxed services they would not mind collecting sales taxes on.

The hardest thing I ever had to do as a parent was stand aside and let my kids blaze their own trails. Please, Big Daddy Government, I know you want to help, but just get out of the way. Chairman Jim, let's go to the bottom line, your shareholders need some real positive results.

Richard Parins, President

The BROWN COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION
Promoting Fiscal Responsibility in Government.

The State and The Economy.

As many of you are aware, the United States is facing a difficult economic outlook with the possibility of a recession in our future. In order to insure the health of Wisconsin's economy, we need to focus on creating and maintaining jobs, especially in high-tech fields.

Governor Doyle gave his annual State of the State address reflecting on the government's accomplishments of the past year and explaining his vision for what needs to be done in the year ahead. I was very pleased to see that much of his speech focused on one issue I believe Wisconsin citizens care about most - the economy. This issue is one of my top priorities.

The signs are obvious that our nation is facing an economic downturn. With a decline in the housing market, higher energy prices, and a volatile stock market, people are concerned about the future, and rightfully so. The governor promoted several economic development proposals to help get Wisconsin's economy back on track. What is striking about his plan is that it mirrors legislative proposals that are already part of our assembly agenda to attract new businesses, especially in high-tech and emerging industries.

In addition to these proposals, the assembly is working on a few other measures to promote economic and workforce development. AB 67 provides for a higher education tax credit to encourage businesses to pay for the education and training of their workers to keep our workers from leaving for jobs out of state. We're working on tax credits to help our meat and dairy industries expand and modernize their facilities to keep up with increased competition from other states like California.

We are also sponsoring a new proposal (LRB 3573) to tap into an unused funding source to expand the Technology Zone Program. This program encourages growth and development of new and existing high-tech businesses by offering tax credits to offset the costs of growing those businesses. The NEWREP technology zone, which covers the Green Bay area, has utilized the program the most and is soon to be running out of its allotted credits. This legislation will free up more credits to continue business development and job growth which is greatly needed in northeast Wisconsin.

The non-partisan Legislative Fiscal Bureau (LFB) provided information to the legislature regarding the general fund tax revenue estimates for the remainder of the 2007-09 biennium. Tax revenues are coming in lower than anticipated, and the economic forecasts for 2008 and 2009 have been revised significantly downward, primarily due to the housing and credit markets as well as high energy prices. Based on current information, the LFB estimates the state is facing a potential budget shortfall of \$300 to \$400 million.

This news clearly shows that now, more than ever, we must work together on passing critical initiatives to stimulate our economy and attract new businesses with good-paying jobs that will provide long-term economic growth. Also, in times of economic downturn, the government should not be raising taxes. Higher taxes hurt taxpayers by taking more money out of your paycheck. Higher taxes also contribute to the economic downturn by taking money out of the economy instead of putting it back in. Instead, government needs to live within its means and make the cuts necessary to keep a balanced budget. Right now, that responsibility falls on the shoulders of Governor Doyle to direct his agency heads to find savings and cut spending.

This news from LFB only goes to show you how important it is that the Assembly fight against higher taxes and spending increases in the 2007-2009 state budget.

State Representative Karl Van Roy

January Meeting Notes

Monthly BCTA meeting Jan. 17.

Members expressed concerns that the Corporate Tax Accountability Act introduced by Sen. Dave Hansen is the beginning of an effort to raise taxes on Wisconsin employers by more than \$1.3 billion, and increase the state's reputation for hostility to business and increasing unemployment.

Questionnaires are being sent to Green Bay City Council and Brown County Board candidates to identify the candidates' positions on issues of vital importance to taxpayers. The responses will be published in a future issue of the *TAX TIMES*.

The pros and cons of taxpayer funding of political campaigns was discussed at length, with members voicing strong arguments in opposition to using tax dollars to pay for political campaigns. Public funding actually entrenches incumbents by limiting the amounts challengers can spend. Any scheme that limits the amounts challengers can spend preserves significant advantages for incumbent office holders. In reality, the public funding solution handicaps challengers instead of leveling the playing field.

Ethical and First Amendment concerns were also expressed. What is ethical about forcibly taking money from a citizen (taxing) and then giving half of that money to candidates that citizen opposes? There are strong First Amendment issues with limiting the amount of money candidates and citizens can use to express their views.

Solutions to the campaign spending issue were discussed. Transparency should be improved by immediate reporting of all contributions with this information being made public in an online data base. Contributions should only be allowed from residents of the district the candidate seeks to represent. (*A contribution from a Maryland labor union to a Brown County Board candidate defies explanation.*)

It was agreed that none of the proposals for public funding of political campaigns has any solution for the effects of independent expenditures by third parties, which are unlimited.

Also, it was agreed that no proposal identifies the real problem that the government is overreaching with too much power to take and give. That power has ever increasing economic value, which creates a bidding war of campaign expenditures for control of that power.

The next meeting will be Thursday, Feb. 21, with Congressman Steve Kagen as speaker. Details on back page of this *TAX TIMES*.

Dave Nelson – Secretary

"Do you ever get the feeling at this point Washington is run by two rival gangs that have a great deal in common with each other, including an essential lack of interest in the well-being of the turf on which they fight?"

. . . Peggy Noonan

VISIT OUR WEBSITE
www.BCTaxpayers.Org
EEmail, BCTA@ExecPc.Com

Everyone's responsibility but mine.

In last week's state-of-the-state, I heard not one word of responsibility for an irresponsible budget, about the irresponsible, absolutely indefensible fiscal position Wisconsin finds itself in.

You know. Like when your kids point fingers at each other with a cacophony of "It's not my fault." Why can't people accept responsibility? Why is it so hard for some of us to utter "It's my fault. I screwed up. Got to get this back on track."

So Governor Doyle starts right from the top blaming the federal government. I couldn't believe it.

"Tonight, our nation finds itself at a time of great uncertainty. America's economy is in deep turmoil. In just the last few days, markets around the world have plummeted and talk in Washington has turned from recovery to recession. Make no mistake: challenging days are ahead."

And then all kinds of rose-colored glasses stuff. We're hardworking, passionate people. We enjoy life and love to laugh about cheeseheads. We face difficulties and overcome them. And of course the obligatory mention of the Green and Gold. And add Jamie Thomson and Steve Stricker to the mix.

Yes, Wisconsin is a great place. Great people too. Great biotech, great higher ed., great R&D. Yes, in spades.

But not great accountability by our politicians.

Here's another whopper that misses the point. And it's shameful.

"In Wisconsin we used conservative estimates from the Fiscal Bureau to develop our budget, but because of the national economic slowdown, we too will face a very difficult fiscal situation. We will have to delay some of the things we all agreed on. We will have to make deep cuts and hard sacrifices."

It couldn't be our fault for demanding more and more of our government. It's certainly not the governor's fault or the Senate's or the Assembly's for not being able to make the tough decisions to cut spending in the current (or past 6) budget. And of course, it must be the country's fault that Wisconsin continues to be saddled with a multi-billion dollar deficit.

And it wouldn't be a Jim Doyle speech if it didn't take a swipe at the oil companies.

"A barrel of oil has topped \$100... and just look at the price of gasoline at the pump - nearly double what it was just five years ago. The oil companies don't care. They're making the biggest profits in history."

And the cost of education - and the stress it's placing on many communities throughout our state. It couldn't be the responsibility of the great teachers in the state of Wisconsin. Great, yes. But the governor actually complained about teacher salaries being too low. Make numbers say anything you want Governor, Wisconsin teacher salaries are slightly below the nationwide average - but add benefits, and our teachers rank 16th in the nation.

So now we get into the really maddening stuff. Health care. Nobody's fault.

Yes, Doyle starts with the right idea. *"Skyrocketing health care costs are paralyzing our economy."* Good. But whose fault is it? Not yours. Not mine. Not any of us (well, most

of us) for not having a clue how much doctors, procedures, tests, prescriptions, cost. No, it's not our responsibility to control utilization, to make prudent life-style decisions, to compare quality and costs religiously. Whose fault is it? Of course, the insurers and the drug companies.

The governor, bless his soul, does have the lingo down. He says we're going to get into *"consumer-driven health care."* No... that doesn't mean you and I will be responsible for health care choices - but rather we'll have a multiplicity of health insurance choices and decisions. And we can control costs with purchasing pools, co-ops and *"insuring we all share the risk."* No, no, no and no. Not the primary way to control health care costs. Certainly not the way to take responsibility for *"paralyzing"* health care costs.

Here's the closest it got to the governor taking any responsibility. And it was a bunch of malarkey.

"In Wisconsin, we've taken steps to prepare for a national economic downturn. We've cut spending, cut taxes, and deposited \$50 million in a rainy day fund."

Definitely rose-colored glasses - and more than stretching the truth. Ok, \$50 million in a rainy day fund. That won't go far to cover the current (and sure to grow) \$2.44 billion deficit. Geez. And cut spending and cut taxes in this last budget? No way. This budget was and is a disaster. Wisconsin's fiscal condition continues to be a disaster. And we have a governor standing up there name-dropping. Dang it.

So once again, the bottom line - The government is living with an irresponsible budget and in an irresponsible, absolutely indefensible fiscal position. The governor blamed everyone and everything but himself. Not one mention of taking responsibility for this mess. Not one. **Jo Egelhoff, FoxPolitics.net.**

Property Tax Rates Difficult To Compare.

Trying to live in a community with the lowest property taxes is not an exact science. For example, taking 5 popular Green Bay suburbs, comparing their municipal tax rates and what they paid to their community for a residence assessed at \$150,000 in 2006 we find: Allouez, \$5.89 per thousand-local taxes \$883.50, DePere (East) \$5.69-\$853.50, Suamico, \$4.97-\$745.50, Ashwaubenon \$4.63-\$712.50, Hobart \$3.99-\$598.50, Howard \$3.32-\$498.00 and Bellevue \$2.89-\$433.50. According to these numbers, a \$150,000 home in Allouez would cost more than double in municipal taxes that of one in Bellevue.

However municipal taxes are only part of your property tax statement. You also must add school taxes which vary somewhat from community to community, county taxes, VTAE and a state tax to get the net tax rate. Then, percentage wise the difference between communities is not quite as great. The net tax rate and assessment on a \$150,000 would be: DePere \$21.02-\$3,020, Suamico \$20.26-2,607, Ashwaubenon \$19.17-\$2,751, Bellevue \$19.14-\$2,291, Allouez \$18.72-\$2,811, Hobart \$16.94-\$2,575, and Howard \$16.74-\$2,506.

Allouez which had the highest municipal tax rate had the fifth highest net tax rate. One explanation is that assessment ratios vary somewhat. Also, communities have different ratios of commercial property, or different needs due to rapid growth.

Dave Steffen & Jim Frink.

Déjà Vu, All Over Again.

During the Governors' State of the State address, he had three sentences early in his speech that reflected Wisconsin's reality:

I "In Wisconsin we used conservative estimates from the Fiscal Bureau to develop our budget, but because of the national economic slowdown, we too will face a very difficult fiscal situation. We will have to delay some of the things we all agreed on. We will have to make deep cuts and hard sacrifices."

Then he went on to talk about the new programs that are starting (no delay), new tax breaks for economic development and various other state programs that should be funded more and some new programs to start. Only three sentences about belt tightening. (Tommy Thompson used to say Slim-Fast diet.) The majority of the next 45 minutes was about spending more.

When the Governor stepped on the podium he was aware that tax collections have slowed. While the state will take in more money than last year, it isn't as much as is projected. We are, at least, \$400 million short over this two year budget. We will get the official numbers from the non-partisan Fiscal Bureau in the middle of February.

At that time the Governor will give us his plan on how to solve this difficulty. He says he isn't going to propose tax increases. (The Democratic Senate Majority Leader, Russ Decker, says they should be considered. You know those shirking businesses aren't doing enough.) So will the Governor really postpone new programs? My bet-only small ones (good talking points), the bulk of this gap will be made up by borrowing and accounting gimmicks. It is an election year so the tax increases the Democratic Senate may entertain aren't really going anywhere.

Wisconsin has been doing this type of budgeting for years. Our Governor inherited this way of doing business. When he ran for office he said he would change this. (Obama and Clinton say they will change Washington, too. Just like Doyle changed Wisconsin. We will have to wait for the next governor to see real change, we can only hope.) This is kind of like being against gambling as Attorney General and then signing away the future to the Indian gambling interests as Governor. What is it about being elected to higher office that causes/allows people to get selective amnesia? Kind of like the time President Bill Clinton's former spokesperson, George Stephanopoulos was asked about the president's broken campaign promises. In a moment of candor, he said, "The President has kept every promise he intended to keep." Some promises apparently come with an under-the-candidate's-breath, "until I am elected."

As a member of the assembly, (which gives me some influence and no control), I will work to see that we balance our budget the way the Governor suggests, putting off programs and reducing the growth in spending. Not by raising taxes, borrowing even more or Enroning our accounting. It will be difficult but is entirely doable.

Time will tell how Wisconsin solves this problem.

Representative Frank Lasee,

If you would like to receive Lasee's Notes, please send an email to laseesnotes@yahoo.com with your name and E-Mail address.

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

E-Mail BCTA@ExecPC.Com.

Barbarous Bonding.

As a loan originator. I am all too familiar with the real cost of interest and borrowing. So when I read that local officials, County Board and City Council members, vote to issue bonds to fix something that will break again before the bond is paid, I drop the paper and scream, "WHAT?!" Why are you buying equipment and repairing roads with bonds, that's Wrong, Wrong, Wrong.

If a food court costs \$500,000 and you bond for ten years at a premium rate of 4%, the actual costs for the construction and accrued interest nears \$750,000 – 150% or \$250,000 more than the actual value of the project. Unless the food court recoups the full \$750,000 before it needs to be remodeled in 4 or 5 years, you have thrown the money away. And what if the court loses so much money it closes after 5 years. Gee, why don't we bond for operating expenses, too?!

If you really think you need a food court, and you don't have cash on hand, recruit and incentivize a private partner. They're the pros.

Local government continues skipping gaily down a gravel path of credit card financing, in taxpayers' worn out, holey sneakers, tossing tax dollars good after bad. It's barbaric! Call these officials and ask them why your money is being squandered with Barbarous Bonding.

Richard Parins

National Debt Update.

On Feb.1, 2008, the official U.S. National Debt was reported to be **\$9,240,877,790,929.** and twenty cents. We said "official" because that is what we are told but they don't include payables like Social Security, Medicare, Pension Plans or interest on the debt.

This amount also represents an increase of \$81.3 Billion over what they reported in January, and somewhat over the average of increasing at a rate of \$1.5 BILLION PER DAY which they have been maintaining the past few years. Don't worry. This month's increase of \$81.3 Billion will look small after they mail us all a check next few months to boost the economy. Fortunately they can always print more money.

JF

"The most terrifying words in the English language are: I'm from the government and I'm here to help." . . . **Ronald Reagan**

"Everything is changing People are taking their comedians seriously and the politicians as a joke." . . . **Will Rogers**

"The politicians promises of yesterday are the taxes of today." . . . **W. L. Mackenzie King**

Things That Make Us Wonder.

There have been several instances of state contractors printing recipients Social Security numbers on labels of mailings – for all the world to see. When questioned about this, a state official gave the excuse that the state doesn't even know how databases of information the government or its contractors has which contain "private social security numbers."

This is incredible! It is also proof that the state government has grown so large that it doesn't even know what it is doing, or for that matter why it is even doing it.

* * * * *

It is an election year, and we are hearing all sorts of proposals intended to improve our health care system, making benefits available to all.

While these proposals all may vary somewhat, one common thread seems to be making some sort of insurance either mandatory or at least available regardless of income or status. So far they have stopped short of completely socializing our system.

While many people are probably satisfied with the quality and availability of health care, the cost of insurance has gone through the roof. The cost of providing insurance and other benefits for government employees is probably the biggest factor driving our taxes higher.

Perhaps more effort should be put on determining what is driving the cost of health care than trying to make us pay more for insurance to cover the cost. Let's start with all the paperwork providers have to contend with filing insurance claims and complying with government regulations.

* * * * *

In January Governor Doyle announced an \$85 million tax credit program he called "Next Generation Manufacturing" to assist companies to create jobs and train workers. While we realize that manufacturing jobs are what keeps the economy moving, tax credits cost the same as state spending.. Low property and income taxes and a realistic regulatory system are also an incentive for business to expand and thrive.

While there are many instances of state assistance being helpful, there are also instances of aid being a bribe to retain business or used as political favors.

* * * * *

The future of the economy in Wisconsin and the country is shaky at best with a number of detracting factors involved. We realize that a minimum income is necessary for a person or family to survive.

Would raising the state minimum wage from \$6.50 per hour to \$7.25 as proposed by the state senate actually help the economy is another question. In 2005, Wisconsin ranked 17th nationally with an average family income of \$58,657 according to the US Census Bureau. This was about \$3,000 above the national average at that time. This also is a lot more than a person could make on a minimum wage. The point is that most people are already paid well above the minimum wage.

The minimum wage is fine for part time employees and students but every time it is increased the result is fewer of these people are employed.

* * * * *

Local and state officials are trying to come up with a more suitable symbol to represent Wisconsin than the popular styrofoam cheesehead.

While a stuffed Muskie or roll of toilet paper are possibilities the cheesehead really says it all.

* * * * *

Let me get this straight. The stock market is falling due to various concerns including poor corporate earnings. The value of our currency is down due largely to the national debt., balance of trade, health care and energy costs, etc.

Now some of the people running for office want to change all this for our benefit. Make the big corporations pay more of their share due to the huge profits they are all making. Maybe so, but corporate profits are what keeps most successful pension plans going.

* * * * *

One bad thing about leap year is that while the extra day is nice, it is also one more day of listen-

ing to election commercials.

* * * * *

In addition to the Presidential primary, Florida residents voted on a statewide referendum that would lower property taxes by an average of \$240.

Municipal unions and school interests campaigned in force and newspapers across the state editorialized against it as being poor policy.

It was approved by a 64 to 36% majority.

* * * * *

An article in USA Today reports that more and more states are denying drivers licenses to illegal immigrants. In fact, only five states: Hawaii, Maine, New Mexico, Utah and Washington still allow them to be licenses.

It is more than legally driving a vehicle. A drivers license can allow one to vote, buy property and enjoy many other advantages of citizenship.

* * * * *

We commend Rep. Tom Nelson for suggesting that the State Legislature meet for longer sessions in order to get more work done and not let vital matters such as the budget drag on for months.

Another view could be that considering the performance of the Legislature they already spend too much time in Madison.

* * * * *

All states seem adept at improving new sources of revenue when the need arises. We read that New York state is now looking for ways to tax illegal drugs. The illegal drug trade is one of the largest businesses in the country, dwarfing many legitimate occupations by billions of dollars.

Problem is that it's all underground and not reported. The IRS and state Revenue Departments all consider income, however earned to be subject to income tax. The question is how would they handle the reporting of profits from an illegal occupation if it were ever reported? Would that make it legal?

* * * * *

The Political Science Dept. of the University of Wisconsin has undertaken a project to track and analyze political advertisements which will be appearing this year. Continued



Their analysis will include the time, content, target audience, tone, time and television program on which appears. The results are to be made public and are being financed with the aid of a \$298,945 grant from the Joyce Foundation which plans to use the information for dealing with campaign finance reform issues.

Hopefully their research will also disclose the source of funding for all political related ads and the interests of those sponsors.

* * * * *

It is always great to receive an unexpected check in the mail, especially if it comes from the government. Both parties are trying to see who can give away the most. Outside of making us all feel good for a brief time however, we wonder what the so called "Economic Stimulus Plan" is going to accomplish except adding another \$160 Billion or more to the national debt.

What are some of the problems we individuals are facing that is effecting the economy? If you are 3,4, or 5 months behind on your mortgage payment \$500 or a thousand won't be much help. Same for someone \$5,000 or more behind on their credit card payments. Some people will probably buy a new TV or other appliance made in China or try to get rich at a casino which will not help our balance of trade any.

Some prudent types may set the money aside to apply to next years property tax bill but it won't go very far. It certainly won't boost the dollar if it increases the national debt and interest, The stock market hasn't shown any remarkable recovery since the payout was announced and even with the reduction of Prime Interest Rates.

Are there other things the government could do to stabilize the economy? Undoubtedly yes, but it is an election year and they wouldn't necessarily make you feel good in the process.

* * * * *

Municipal and County governments have various boards and committees composed of elected officials plus various qualified citizens to assist in the overseeing of areas of responsibility .

While these committees operate for the benefit of the entire community , we understand that some seats are

actually occupied by trade groups rather than individuals which could weigh committee decisions to their advantage.

* * * * *

A recent article in the Press-Gazette reported that tribal tobacco outlets were passing the new \$1.00 per pack cigarette tax on to customers in order to comply with the intent of discouraging smoking. Supermarkets now charge \$48.89 for a carton of Marlboros, while the tribal outlets are advertising them for only \$37.90 per carton. The tax must be extra.

In the meantime, the Dept. of Revenue has warned people it is illegal to purchase cigarettes in states with lower taxes for use in Wisconsin. Go figure.

* * * * *

While Wisconsin faces a huge budget deficit, the Governor of Indiana, whose state faces a \$231 revenue shortfall has ordered all state agencies spending budgets by 5%. They also are delaying certain projects until such times as the economic forecast improves. Brilliant.

* * * * *

Let's hope that if the Govt. mails you a check as part of their "Economic Stimulus Plan" they have your address. A news article Jan. 31, reported that 12 U. S. Immigration officers from Milwaukee were able to locate a total of 20 illegal immigrants in the area who had previously ignored deportation orders. This was from a total of an estimated 590,000 in the country who apparently they have been unable to locate. Keep looking.

* * * * *

The Packers are a treasure that makes our community unique and known throughout the world. We realize that fans bring in tons of money to spend on game weekends which fuels the local economy. For some business it represents an expense.

The Journal/Sentinel published an article assuming that if every employee in the state spend 1 hour per week while at work discussing the Packers it would cost state employers \$40 Million per week based on an average wage or \$14.49 hour. Obviously this would be hard to prove, but we of-

ten wonder if the money local people spend on tickets which goes to salaries and then leaves the area is factored in the profit and loss statements.

* * * * *

It is good news that the .05% sales tax is paying off the mortgage on the stadium faster than originally anticipated, and that recent reductions in interest rates are also reducing the debt.

Unfortunately it is reported that collections have fallen somewhat due to the economy. This should be of great concern for the Brown County business community, for each one million that the Packer fall short represents \$200 Million in sales of taxable items (*hotel rooms, meals, merchandise, etc.*) necessary to generate the tax that Brown County business has lost. Figure it out.

* * * * *

An article in USA Today reports that lobbyists, labor unions and corporations in Washington have been buying large homes and apartments in the vicinity of the Capitol for the purpose of entertaining our representatives. Also possibly to influence them also.

This is a huge business with several thousand lobbyists having access to government officials in efforts to influence legislation for their employers.

Unfortunately you and I do not have the resources to receive this type of attentions. It is also unfortunate that proposed changes in campaign financing laws do little to change this. Lobbying is also big business in Madison.

* * * * *

Exxon Mobil reported a gross profit of \$40.6 Billion for 2007 and the media was quick to point out this was the result of the high price we have been paying for gasoline.

While this claim may be rightfully so, (*many factors worldwide effect the price of oil*), there was no mention in the articles about how much income tax they were paying on their profits, or the amount of dividends they will pay which support many pension accounts including those of government employees.

Considering where the stock market has been headed recently, (*on which the status our economy is largely based*), Exxon-Mobil's success could be taken as a positive sign rather than used by the media for as a scapegoat to ridi-

cule our free enterprise system.

* * * * *

The system for nominating presidential candidates needs fixing. The party conventions which supposedly select their candidates are still five months away and the election is in 10 months but the media makes it sound like it's all over. As this is written, only five states, each with different rules and representing only a small fraction of the votes needed for nomination have caused about 2 out of 3 of the original candidates to withdraw from the race due largely to the lack of money to publicize their qualifications.

It sometimes appears that interests with large amounts of money can force their candidates and views on the people. Is this the best way to select the leader of our country?

* * * * *

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that local government workers now earn an average of \$38.50 per hour in total compensation compared to \$26.09 in the private sector. There are about 20 Million government workers whose wages are in effect paid by a total of 116 Million private sector workers.

From 2000 to 2007 government workers compensation increased 16% compared to 11% of private workers.

One reason given for the discrepancy is private employers face rising costs which they cannot absorb and rising unemployment while government units can simply raise taxes to cover their expenses.

* * * * *

How many auto accidents have you heard of or were involved in which were the fault of uninsured motorists? Did you know that Wisconsin is one of only two states which does not require motorists to have auto insurance?

Compulsory insurance laws have been introduced in the legislature 12 times since 1971, and each time they have been sidetracked. State Sen. John Lehman is introducing a bill calling for all drivers to carry at least \$50,000 injury liability and \$10,000 property damage.

Reasons for not having such legislation passed previously are the high costs of compliance and people

find ways to get around the laws.

* * * * *

It seems the best ideas anyone has for campaign finance reform is using public money to prevent special interests from influencing candidates. Governor Doyle has proposed giving \$400,000 of tax money to each candidate for the States Supreme Court. This as a result of the recent race won by Annette Ziegler which cost several million and pointed out the influence that court judges have in Wisconsin politics.

While we agree that Supreme Court judges should be strictly non-partisan and unbiased, we can disagree with giving them public money to run for the office. Once such a practice is initiated where would it stop? Even those running unopposed would want some of the action.

* * * * *

One state senator, Jeff Smith of EauClaire has proposed establishing a "clean elections fund", to be funded by a tax on lobbyists and their sponsors. It would provide \$50,000 for assembly campaigns and \$100,000 for the state senate. While taxing lobbyists may be something that even Governor Doyle has not thought of, aren't these the people who are causing all of the problems and need for campaign finance reform in the first place?

* * * * *

The legislature is proposing the state pay Georgia Thompson's legal bills of \$228,792. Recall that she was the State Dept. of Administration worker who was convicted of steering a travel contract to a firm who had made campaign contributions to state elected officials.. The charge was later overturned and she was released from jail.

She was seeking \$359,000 as the settlement would be taxable to her but if the state pays the law firm directly she would not be liable. No word if the law firm also was a campaign contributor. It would seem that if it was proved the conviction was in error, perhaps those who brought the charges should also share some of the liability.

As usual, lots of things to wonder about.
Jim Frink

"Things That Make Us Wonder" consists of thoughts, mostly taxpayer related in some way, which occur to us from the days news events. Some are 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. One of our purposes is to encourage debate and 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."

Representative Kagen to Appear at February BCTA Meeting.

We have invited 8th District Congressman Steve Kagen to attend and address our February 21, BCTA meeting, and he has graciously accepted.

We would like a good turnout of members to meet with Mr. Kagen. Also, guests are welcome to attend.

Due to a larger anticipated attendance, this meeting will be held in the upstairs meeting room of Titledown Brewing. We will plan on serving lunch at 12:00 noon for those planing to eat, and are asking Mr. Kagen to speak at 12:30 and will have adequate seating available for those who do not eat. Details on the back page of this *TAX TIMES*.

Complete and Return Taxpayer Questionnaire.

Enclosed with this *TAX TIMES* is our 2008 Taxpayer Survey. It should only take about 5 minutes to complete and return, but the information is valuable to us as a guide to the opinions of our readers. All readers of the *TAX TIMES* are invited to participate. ***Thank you.***

"People who complain about taxes can be divided into two classes. Men and Women/" . . . **Anonymous**

The TAX TIMES

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

PRSR STD
U. S. Postage
PAID
Green Bay, WI
Permit No. 255

Inside This Issue

“There he goes again...”
The State and The Economy.
January Meeting Notes.
Everyone’s Responsibility But Mine.
Property Tax Rates Difficult To Compare.
Deja Vu, All Over Again.
Barbarous Bonding.
National Debt Update.
Things That Make Us Wonder.
Representative Kagen to Address BCTA Meeting.
Complete Taxpayer Questionnaire.
and more.

The TAX TIMES - February, 2008

BCTA Meeting and Events Schedule – MARK YOUR CALENDARS.

Tuesday - February 19, 2008, Local and Presidential Primary elections.

Thursday - February 21, 2008. BCTA Monthly Meeting.
Titledown Brewing Co., 2d Floor Meeting Room.
Speaker: 8th District Congressman Steve Kagen.
12:00 P.M. Luncheon Served.
12:30 P.M. Representative Kagen.
We will have extra seating. Guests are cordially invited
Candidates for local office are invited to attend this meeting and will be recognized.

Thursday - March 20, 2008. Monthly BCTA Meeting, 12:00 Noon.
TITLETOWN Brewing Co., “Frost” Room.

Unless otherwise notified, BCTA monthly meetings are held the Third Thursday of each month, 12:00 Noon, at Titledown 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 for lunch, \$7.00, Payable at meeting. Includes lunch, tax & tip.

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



February,
2008



“I get frustrated when people don’t seem to understand that we can do so much to help.” . . . Hillary Clinton

“If god had wanted us to vote, he would have given us candidates.”
. . . Jay Leno

“To define democracy in one word, we must use the word “cooperation.”
. . . Dwight D. Eisenhower

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.