

Gov. James Bond-age.

Bond:

- Something that binds, ties, or fastens things together.
- A duty, promise, or other obligation by which one is bound.
- A sum of money paid as bail or surety.
- A certificate of debt issued by a government or corporation guaranteeing payment of the original investment plus interest by a specified future date.

This is not an exhaustive list of definitions for the word 'bond,' but it contains the germ of our state's budgetary dilemma. Diamond Jim Doyle's bond to the teacher's union trumped his bond to voters, causing him to bond our tobacco bond as a bond on future bonds, bonding us to our pattern of bonding prior bonds we bonded as bond for our bonds.

Gov. McCallum engineering his original tobacco securitization bond with the same zeal as 19th Century French built the first levees on the Mississippi River in New Orleans. But clever levees don't end the problem of rising water, any more than bonding solves rising debt. You don't create debt to pay off debt. New Orleans' first levees were 3 feet high. Now they are 24-50 feet high. Talk about compound interest.

Now Gov. James Bond wants to re-bond the tobacco bonds and spend the proceeds for things like his BadgerCare Plus expansion -- creating ongoing expenses with one-time revenue. Honestly speaking, I suspect Mr. Doyle doesn't burn the polluting midnight oil creating these stratagems, but who is/are the aberrant analyst?

And the municipal bonds market stinks right now. As former DOA Sec. George Lightbourn, who presided over the original tobacco bonds, wrote for the Wisconsin Policy Reach Institute, "Last summer and all the way through early February, the state was able to secure short-term rates of 4.5% to 6.5%. Since then the rates have shot up. Governor Doyle's administration is now regularly seeing rates of 10% and, on March 20 - 14.75%. This is not the time to be selling bonds." Call Citizens for Responsible Government! Call Americans for Tax Reform! Call Stephen Biskupic! Call the FBI! Call Gov. Spitz..., oh yeah! Gov. James Bond is trying to reverse mortgage our state!

He wants us to believe he is a deficit whittler. "Just like any real solution to a budget gap, this plan cuts spending and looks for good sources of revenue," Gov. Doyle said, announcing his budget repair bill, "and it does it by protecting priorities like education, health care, and job creation while not raising taxes. The earlier it can be enacted, the more good it will do." Maybe he caught audacity of hope from his buddy Barack. Hope is infectious, I hear. But even the audacious Count Dracula never hoped to suck blood from his victims' great-grandchildren.

And Gov. Doyle's hospital tax is more hopeful audacity - hoping to leverage a boatload of federal dollars that are "just sitting there." Sen. Mike Ellis said it straight: "Today, the federal budget has a deficit of as much as \$550 billion. Even worse, our national debt has soared to more than \$9 trillion. In 2006 alone, the federal government paid more than \$406 billion in interest on that debt ... To get that 'free money' from the federal government, the government will have to borrow it."

More audacity? Gov. Bond's budget 'repair' bill borrows \$257 million to backfill funds filched from the transportation fund! Even our beloved Tommy Thompson, who was no stranger to government spending; he never tapped a segregated fund for general purposes. Some things are sacred.

We're broke and Doyle's draining our savings into his teacher pals' pockets, tossing another IOU in the Transportation Fund, and declaring victory! And just to add a little bling-bling, even our Assembly Republican allies, local government friends, agreed with Gov. Doyle to delay a \$125 million school aid payment - another budget balanced on an accounting trick. What's next? Delaying shared revenue payments? Don't think the city and county fiscal administrators I spoke with, didn't posit this potential fiscal foible. Cities and county budgets are based on that accumulating interest, i.e. investment income.

Politicians will not or can not make the critical spending choices. So we edge closer to bonding for make our bond payments on things like the unfunded civil service retirements, as other cities, counties and states have begun doing. Look at the local budgets under bonding, for software?

Gov. Bond, James Bond. Licensed to kill ... our credit rating. What if Wisconsin really needed the money and no one would buy our bonds for a reasonable rate, what do we do? "Hello, Payday Lenders, Gov. James Bond here and I need \$200 million tomorrow. ... 200% interest? If that's the best you can do ..." Better yet, Governor, you can just call 'Credit Report(dot)com.'

Local government should throw up their hands in an All-American tax revolt, only Gov. Doyle's got their hands tied behind their backs. They're in Gov. James Bondage.

Richard Parins - President

“The Economic Impact of Immigration on Green Bay.”

The Wisconsin Policy Institute, a non-profit group established to study public policy issues affecting the state of Wisconsin has issued a 23 page report entitled “*The Economic Impact of Immigration on Green Bay.*” You can download a copy from their website, www.wpri.org.

Examined was Green Bay’s past, present and projected future demographics, along with the fiscal implications of immigration in Brown County and the impact of immigration on jobs and wages. While much of the material consists of projecting present day data to future points in time under calculated circumstances, we certainly are in no position or have any reason to question the methodology or validity of the report.

One of the first items of interest is that for the year 2006, the white population of Green Bay was 80.5% while the white population of the state was 87.5%. The Hispanic population was 10.7% in Green Bay and only 4.6% in the entire state. The percentage of Hispanics for the U.S. was given as 14.7%.

The report did not specify if it was limited to the Green Bay city limits, the metropolitan area or Brown County but we assume it was for the corporate city. Using projections based on current trends they estimate that in 25 years (2032) the Hispanic population in Green Bay will be between 26.1 and 29.2%. The total percentage of foreign born could rise from the present 8.2% to 13.8%. The projected population of the city and county at that time was not mentioned. Aside from their using current state and national projected trends, we could not identify the compelling reason such as availability of work or lifestyle that would attract such a large Hispanic migration to this area.

Areas such as projected state and local taxes by immigrant groups as compared to the population as a whole, and their consumption and cost of tax supported services they would receive in return were discussed in some detail. Included in their discussion were welfare, medical related expenses, child care, and other taxpayer supported services. Since these figures are largely projected to the future, it would be a matter of dealing with them in future county and city budgets.

However, it did state that the largest cost would be for public education. They state that in 2000 there were 4,021 immigrant students enrolled in Brown County schools. Based on an average cost of \$8,163 per student leaves a taxpayer cost of \$32,823,423.00 per year.

The report acknowledges that it is difficult to differentiate between legal and illegal immigration, as apparently there is no accurate method of counting those living here illegally. One problem mentioned is that because of their status, illegal immigrants are not easily able to gain employment and thus contribute to the economy, or for that matter, receive benefits.

There is a lot of information to consider in the report and they do not make any negative or positive conclusions regarding the future. We would suggest if interested you obtain your own copy. Hopefully with responsible city management events and conditions can be controlled in an orderly fashion as they occur for the benefit of all.

Jim Frink – BCTA

What's In Your Wallet?

Governor Doyle and the Senate want to dip further in your pockets to solve the budget shortfall while the assembly passes a fix that won't raise taxes.

Wisconsin is facing a \$652 million dollar (or more) budget shortfall due to excess spending and a decline in the economy. Governor Doyle has introduced his proposal to correct the shortfall. His plan calls for a new tax on hospitals, another raid of nearly \$250 from the states transportation fund, and a \$130 million in spending cuts. While I applaud the \$130 million in cuts, to quote an editorial in the *Green Bay Press Gazette*, "Three parts taxes or robbing Peter to pay Paul, one part spending cuts" we cannot go back to the people for more. Doesn't Governor Doyle get it? Wisconsin residents are struggling too.

Supporters of the hospital tax, including The Wisconsin Hospital Association and Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce, have endorsed the idea of the hospital tax saying that it will allow for higher reimbursements for hospitals. While this is a laudable goal, they fail to recognize two key points.

First, not all hospitals will benefit from this new revised hospital tax. Bay Area Medical Center of Marinette will lose one million dollars a year under the proposed tax. Who will pay that bill? Of course its patients like you and me. At a time when health care costs are out of control, that's just plain crazy.

Second, the plan calls for \$700 million dollars to come from the federal government. One has to ask, who pays that bill? The federal government has only one source of income, taxes. We all will end up paying that bill as well!

Under the Governor's proposal he will once again dip into his personal spending account or the transportation fund as he has done in the past! If he is successful this would bring the total raid on the fund, since he took office, to \$1.25 Billion dollars. He has replaced this money with increased borrowing; thus placing the financial burden on future generations.

Part of the Governor's plan that is generating little attention is the re-securitization (refinancing) of the tobacco settlement money. This will allow the state government to access more of that money now, but will result in a net loss of \$913 million dollars over the lifetime of those payments. I think everyone can agree that's a bad financial decision. That is equivalent to the state using "Check into Cash" to balance our budget.

The Assembly passed the following budget fix.

- * \$450 million dollars in spending cuts
- * \$100 million dollar transfer from reserve funds
- * \$125 million dollar delay (June to July) in payment to schools

I will be the first to admit this is not a perfect solution. Critics will say, in addition to cuts, we are taking money from our rainy day fund, and delaying a payment a few days to improve cash flow. These are both true. However, the financial problems we face as a state is no different than those that Wisconsin families are experiencing. We cannot ask you to pay more because Madison is unwilling to feel the pain as well. Families are cutting spending, dipping into their savings, and perhaps putting off a payment a few days. Shouldn't government do the same? Government is supposed to be a representation of the people. It's time we start acting like it.

Rep. John Nygren

Short-Term Solutions Likely to Dominate State Budget "Fix."

WISTAX Analyzes Plans to Erase State Deficit

When the governor and state lawmakers finally agree on how to erase the state's \$652-million deficit, the "budget fix" is likely to be dominated by stopgap measures, according to a new analysis from the nonpartisan Wisconsin Taxpayers' Alliance (WISTAX).

In reviewing proposals from the governor, senate, and assembly, WISTAX found that all three want, to varying degrees, to spend surplus, borrow, use accounting "tricks," and transfer monies from other sources to balance the general fund budget.

Wisconsin has some of the smallest budget reserves in the U.S., but the governor and legislators all want to spend more of what little surplus exists. Under all three proposals, Wisconsin's mid-2009 surpluses would range from 0.2% to 0.7% of spending, leaving no margin for error.

All three also rely on borrowing by reissuing \$125.4 million in bonds that were to be paid off. In addition, the governor and senate seek to prop up the transportation fund with \$257 million and \$50 million in bonds, respectively. Both also want to turn again to tobacco bonds for extra cash.

Assembly Republicans and senate Democrats both seek a \$125-million accounting maneuver that would spend school aid dollars but not appropriate additional money until the following fiscal year.

The governor wants to transfer \$414 million from other funds to the general fund, including \$243 million from the transportation fund and \$125 million from a new segregated hospital-tax fund. All told, the governor has asked to remove \$1.4 billion from the transportation fund over the last three biennia. The senate proposes \$194 million in fund transfers, with \$125 million in hospital taxes leading the way. The assembly seeks no transfers.

Unlike borrowing, accounting gimmicks, and fund transfers, less spending or additional revenues can be long-term budget solutions. Assembly Republicans propose \$361 million in spending reductions, while the governor and senate want \$87.4 million and \$40 million, respectively, in cuts or lapses. Other than a new hospital tax, the governor is asking for \$6 million in general fund tax increases and the senate, \$126.6 million, mostly in corporate income taxes.

"Whatever the ultimate solution," WISTAX President Todd A. Berry concludes, "the state is likely to face a 'structural deficit' of \$700 million, \$800 million, or more in early 2009." State government has had structural budget problems since 1997.

Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance wistax@wistax.org

"The only difference I've found in Congress between Republican and Democratic leadership is that one of them is skinning us from the toes up and the other from the ears down"

. . . Huey Long

"We wouldn't need oil at all if there were a law mandating that auto makers manufacture perpetual-motion Machines."

. . . James Taranto

March Meeting Notes.

Judge Hanson Addresses BCTA

Monthly meeting March 20, at Titledown Brewing.

Green Bay Municipal Court Judge Jerry Hanson reported on the improvements he has made in the Green Bay Municipal Court during his first year in office. Judge Hanson previously served as Director of Internal Services for the City, overseeing Legal Services, Human Resources, and Risk Management. Prior to that, he served as Green Bay City Attorney.

Judge Hanson explained that the shared revenue cuts have kept the Human Resources Department continuously searching for new efficiencies to offset those cuts and maintain the level of services Green Bay Citizens expect. He has continued the search for new efficiencies in the Municipal Court, which processes over 22,000 citations per year.

Judge Hanson holds Truancy Court in the four Green Bay high schools. Truancy Court sessions held in the high schools allow school personnel to attend and participate in the sessions. Holding the sessions during lunch hour minimizes time students spend away from the classroom.

Warrant Settlement Day is held twice a year in Municipal Court, allowing people with outstanding warrants to come in without fear of being arrested. Resulting efficiencies are reductions in police officer time for pickups, court time, and jail costs. Good Cause/Indigency hearings are now combined and held before issuing warrants for unpaid fines, reducing paperwork and police officer time. Municipal Court and warrant records can now be accessed through the City of Green Bay website.

Delinquent fines for traffic and juvenile cases are filed with the Wisconsin Department of Revenue, intercepting tax refunds to collect the unpaid fines. Judge Hanson also noted that the revenue from the Municipal Court contributes over \$1 million per year to the City of Green Bay's budget.

State Senator Rob Cowles reported his opposition to the \$420 million hospital tax proposed to reduce the state's budget shortfall. He stated that the state could save millions of dollars annually by improving state government operations. Serving on the Joint Legislative Audit Committee, Senator Cowles feels that there are lots of opportunities for savings waiting to be discovered. While progress is being made with a new purchasing system, the state doesn't have a standardized cost/benefit system, which could produce enormous savings.

Green Bay Alderman Guy Zima presented his observations about Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) projects in downtown Green Bay and, in particular, the Mall Properties of Wisconsin \$5 million lawsuit over rent payments for the Younkers building. He explained that the term sheet approved by the Green Bay City Council did not include the indemnification clause committing the City to responsibility for the lost rent payments if Mall Properties should successfully sue for them. Alderman Zima has called for an investigation to determine who added the indemnification clause to the contract after the term sheet without that clause was approved by the City Council.

The next scheduled meeting is April 17, at Titledown Brewing Co., details on back page of this "TAX TIMES."

Dave Nelson – Secretary

Thank You Dan Nerad.

As you are all aware, at the end of this school year, Green Bay Area Supt. Of Schools Dr. Dan Nerad will begin a new challenge as the Supt. Of Schools in Madison. We sincerely wish him well.

Dan has served 33 years with the Green Bay District, and can take credit for many accomplishments during that time. In 2006 he was named "Wisconsin Supt. Of The Year" by his peers which undoubtedly focused his qualifications to the people in Madison.

This is a somewhat larger district than Green Bay, and we are sure he will accept many if not more of the same challenges as here. These include providing a first-class education to an increasingly more diversified student population, satisfying the concerns of parents over the safety of their children, and providing adequate facilities with a qualified staff. He made tough decisions regarding school security and student safety. All while balancing the mandates and constraints imposed by the state with the concerns of local property tax payers.

Dr. Nerad took direct responsibility for the actions of the school district, and was always willing and available to make appearances and speak with various groups and parents about any concerns they might have. We appreciate the fact that he worked his way up to Superintendent while at Green Bay and was familiar with the city and school system.

In addition to his busy work schedule, Dan found time to participate in various community groups and causes; various professional organizations as well as continue his own education.

Green Bay's loss will be Madison's gain. JF

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

State programs to cut?

Three basic concepts of any solution to Wisconsin's current budget mess:

- It's probably not the best time to be increasing taxes.
- The projected deficit in 2009 at the end of the biennium is predicted to be \$650+ million - with many good assumptions increasing that to over \$1B.
- The deficit, at the end of the last budget was well over \$2B!
- We're starting to talk some serious numbers.

So, it should be apparent (is it?) to most of us that it's time to cut back on spending. Recently I suggested possible programs to cut, to get the conversation started.

More thoughts have surfaced since.

Check out what New Jersey Democratic Governor Jon Corzine is threatening: Corzine, who presided over mergers and acquisitions as chairman of Goldman Sachs, is telling hundreds of New Jersey's smallest towns and boroughs that they are too small to exist. Multiple layers of government are financially wasteful, and the littlest towns and boroughs need to merge with their bigger neighbors to achieve economies of scale.

Corzine's incentive -- more like a hammer -- is a threatened cutoff of state aid. Under the governor's proposed budget, the state's 323 towns with populations of fewer than 10,000 people would face drastic cuts if they do not consolidate. Towns with populations between 5,000 and 10,000 people would see their aid sliced in half. Those with more than 10,000 would have their aid frozen at 2007 levels. And those... with fewer than 5,000 people, would get zero state funding. Zilch.

323? Wisconsin has about 550 cities, villages and towns that are less than 10,000 in population - and that doesn't even count those towns less than 2,500 that the Blue Book doesn't list. Wow. Is there duplication? Surely would seem there's a whole lot more efficient way of managing the hundreds and hundreds of units of government in Wisconsin.

More ideas surfaced from comments in response to my earlier article on Possible Program Cuts.

- Reverse the legislators' salary increase and cut or eliminate per diem reimbursement. (From Jack Lohman: according to WDC, the legislature voted 8-1 to increase legislative pay 6.3 percent to \$50,438 in 2009. Add to that an average \$8,771 in food and lodging expenses a year.)
- Look at Technical College budgets. (With no elected board minding the store, Tech College budgets have increased at greater than cities and schools in the last decade.)
- Cut (or eliminate?) the Highway Patrol, as many of their services are duplicated by county and local law enforcement.
- Cut Real ID.
- Get creative in education, use more paraprofessionals.
- Don't start any new state highway construction.
- Cut the "Department of Concrete" (Transportation, I'm assuming...) by 50%.
- Eliminate the Department of Tourism.

As I have said previously about this, it isn't easy. Some of the suggestions above are less doable and less serious than others - but they are suggestions. We've got to do something. And no more smoke and mirrors to solve the state's budget problems. It's serious business and must somehow be addressed. Jo Egelhoff, FoxPolitics.net.

"If the people fail to vote, a government will be developed which is not their government. The whole system of American government rests on the ballot box. Unless citizens perform their duties, their system of government is doomed to failure." . . . Calvin Coolidge

"The chief cause of problems is solutions." . . . Eric Severeid

Green Bay Public School Task Force. Progress -March 31, 2008.

Many days have passed since the first meeting of a task force comprising of 50 members from the community. We started in July of 2007 and have met twice a month, (plus very numerous sub-committee meetings and assignments) at the Green Bay School District (GBSD) headquarters

Taxpayers may recall the Referendum in February 2007, for construction of a new high school and other renovations that resulted in a two to one defeat. The cost of 60 million dollars along with a 9 million dollar repair budget (additional) was not favorable or necessary in the voter's minds.

The results apparently surprised the district, and the Board created a Task Force charged with looking at (1) Enrollment problems and (2) the Cost of maintaining the schools, and comprised of members of the community. I am the representative for the Brown County taxpayers Association.

The Task Force decided that an organized approach was required, and settled for a procedure based on Kepner Trigoe, because of the complexity and the sheer size of our numbers. The Agenda we follow starts with a full explanation of the problem as presented by members of the GBSD administrative staff.

The Task force then investigates them, analyses them, after which solutions are created, and then those solutions are reviewed for effectiveness and other standards, before an answer (s) is developed. We have had some heady battles so far, but almost every vote has been unanimous, to date.

So where are we?

Part 1 Enrollment Issues:

First we tackled student projections, which you may recall was a major point of contention in the referendum. We resolved that with a new formula for the district to "consider" and to be used by the Task force for its calculations. (Realize, we are only advisory in nature, we will submit our recommendations to the GBSD board when complete, or when we have a point of order!)

The new formula uses a Five-year average of Births (in the district) to project future Kindergarten enrollment and subsequent grade progression numbers. This new formula when used on historical data more accurately predicted our (real) experienced growth and lowered the original projections used by the district. The formula was used in 3 ways, District wide projections, by quadrant (HS) and by individual school.

We then tackled school capacities by reviewing every school in the District, both room size, design, and legal requirements were covered. We agreed to new numbers again, which reflect the capacity of each and every school at this time.

We then tackled school " Utilization", a very touchy subject (!) that is based on several factors but Curriculum being the foremost in this writers mind. Since this affects High Schools mostly, It currently rates Preble with 98% and the others down to 75%~ with a district wide level of about 86.2 %. For purposes of planning (only !) the task force selected 85 % as a desirable target, not a requirement.

It is very apparent to me, that the substantial number of special education classrooms puts a great deal of load on the capacities of the GBSD in both Elementary and High Schools. with heavy budget implications.

This is where we are at currently. We have the projections and the capacities and the utilization factors. Now we enter into the " solutions" stage.

This is where Public input is critical. If you have thoughts, kindly relate them to me or use the district website to voice your comment. <http://www.greenbay.k12.wi.us/01/info/enrollment/>

Part 2 Repairs and Maintenance budget.

The complexity of multi-year repairs and the absence of doing them on a timely basis has put the school district in a severe financial bind. The district has asked the Task Force for comments and suggestions on handling this issue. (To review the projects, go to <http://www.greenbay.k12.wi.us/01/info/enrollment/handout8A.html> and review handout 8-A dated 11-16-08)

Currently the total amounts to over \$60,000,000. for a district that plans to spend \$660,000 this year for such repairs. a severe difference in needs and expenditures to say the least. To prioritize the list of 11-16 the Task Force appointed a sub-committee to review and prioritize the requests. This sub-committee will make it first study results presentation to the Task Force and the public on April 1,2008.

I suggest members here go to the first URL above, and look up the presentation

The district is on record that the cause of this fiscal crisis in maintenance is the QEO of 1994. This remains to be seen in my opinion. The current trend among Wisconsin school districts is to forgo maintenance and use bonding revenue as a means of keeping up the schools. That gives them greater flexibility for Salaries and other budgetary items and allows exceeding the State mandated income level.

It does however also relinquish them from one of their top priorities, Preservation of investment in school buildings and properties. I have always believed that any Board has a responsibility to the shareholders (aka Taxpayers) First.

Due to the long hours of volunteer work many of your fellow citizens have incurred, the Task Force may take a recess and continue next fall. It is an issue before us now.

Rich Carlstedt – BCTA

Federal Debt Update. As of the first of April the U.S. National Debt climbed to **\$9,413,087,128,898.58**, which is an increase of **\$66,705,062,830 and seventy-six cents** over last month at this time. We note this is somewhat ahead of the usual rate of increase which has been about 1.5 Billion per day. Perhaps Uncle Sam is already expensing some of the \$300 Billion promised in tax rebates, or are they saving the income tax money already coming in for the purpose? The interest on this amounts to **\$1,007.76** per U.S. Citizen per day. No credit crisis there. **JF**

"You can't be for big government, big taxes, and big bureaucracy and still be for the little guy." . . **Ronald Reagan**
"If you think health care is expensive now, wait until you see what it costs when it is free." . . **P. J. O'Rourke.**

Things That Make Us Wonder.

The Renard Island (FKA Kidney Island) dredging disposal site has been sitting in the bay for 30 years or so waiting for some type of resolution. Recently the County Board has discussed building a causeway to make it accessible for improvement and some possible use.

In the meantime someone will have to figure out what to do with future bay and river dredgings as they occur.

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It may be some time before any serious dredging begins on the Fox River and the projected cost keeps rising. Brown County Judge Zeidmulder ruled that 9 insurance companies for Appleton Papers would be liable for up to \$730 Million covering their share of river pollution. Appeals could take awhile, as well as determining liability for other mills which are involved.

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An item in the Wall Street Journal reports that The City of Chicago has the highest sales tax of any city in the country. The combined city, county and state rate is 10.25% That's on everything. You pay more for hotel rooms, car rentals, cigarettes, etc.

It was reported that public-employee unions lobbied for the latest tax increase, and as a result 700-800 "patronage" jobs will be added to the payroll.

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For some reason or other, the U.S. Dept. of Commerce reports that the per capita income in Minnesota is over \$4,000 higher than in Wisconsin) \$37,322 to \$33,251. While Minnesota's state taxes are also high, their per capita property taxes are about \$400 less than in Wisconsin, with the net result our neighbors to the west have more money to spend. Maybe we should send some of our legislators over there to figure out how they do it.

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The high price of oil is driving up the cost of electric power all over the country. Environmental interests are constantly proposing stricter emission standards on coal powered generating facilities.

In the meantime the Wisconsin Senate refuses to give any consideration to lifting it's moratorium on new nuclear power plants. While expensive to build and with mixed results for those constructed in the past, there have also been technical advances in recent years to make them safer and more efficient to operate. They provide a much greater percentage of power in European countries than here, and may have to be given more consideration in the future as a matter of necessity if people want electric power.

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One of the Governor's latest plans for fixing the state budget is to "borrow" some more money from the segregated highway fund. This will put the total taken from this account close to the Billion dollar mark.

The problem is if they want to build a highway they must borrow the money; add the interest to the final cost, and figure out some new tax of their own to pay the bill. They will have to pay a high rate of interest due to Wisconsin's lousy credit rating

One question is how did the DOT have so much cash lying around in the first place? They are forever making plans and doing surveying but it takes forever to complete a new highway. How many years have they been working on Hwy. 57 to Sturgeon Bay at 5 miles a year. Same with 41 and 141 north of Green Bay. We realize land acquisition and proper construction is tremendously expensive but so is financing and expenses caused by unnecessary delays.

One project of interest to Brown County is the proposed bridge and connection to Hwy. 41 south of DePere. Unfortunately federal money is also difficult to obtain.

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Green Bay officials are talking about an expansion of the downtown KI Center, and proposing an extension of the room tax presently used to finance the Resch Center and local tourism as a source of revenue. No doubt the perceived need and potential benefits of this expansion will be expounded by a team of consultants as done here in the past. For the old arena, Shopko Hall, Lambeau Field

and the Resch Center.

The downtown area seems to be a basket case with millions of dollars already invested and lost in the deserted mall and other projects. Presently there is a \$5 Million lawsuit pending against the city. Never mentioned is the cost of buying and demolishing half of Green Bay's downtown area when the Mall was first built. The mall failed despite a couple of renovations and the success of the Resch Center. Any public money at this time could turn out to be a hard sell.

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The Press-Gazette ran an attendance report covering our elected officials at official scheduled meetings, which indicated a very low amount of absenteeism. We are sure that those who missed had good excuses.

This is commendable. When someone seeks an elected office, they accept the responsibility of attending meetings and making important decisions. The report didn't indicate whether they did their homework and familiarized themselves with the packet of information furnished before the meetings.

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A recent report made note of the fact that Wisconsin's Indian Tribes have given the state nearly \$196 million during the past three years from their casino profits. This equates to about \$65 Million per year. Whether or not this is should be considered a large or fair amount would depend on their gross receipts and net profit. The state will take every cent it can get.

The state claims that the Ho-Chunk tribe which operates one of the larger casinos supposedly owes us about \$70 Million and wants to negotiate a new compact.

In the meantime, the Ho-Chunks have announced plans to open a "small" casino with only 600 gaming machines near Wittenberg, which is only 15 miles from another tribes existing casino in Bowler.

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The IRS has been experimenting with the use of private collection agencies in an effort to collect some of the \$300 Billion or so in delinquent federal taxes due them.

A USA Today article states that they now claim that in their case, this privatization effort has only collected a net of \$11 Million during the last year, or about \$81 Million

less than if they did the job themselves.

They blame the cost of IRS overhead expenses in managing the program and the high collection fees charged by the private contractors for the failure of the program. No mention that as a Government bureaucracy the IRS perhaps didn't want it to work in the first place. Their employees union had claimed it was a security risk to taxpayer data.

In the meantime it is business as usual for the IRS, making things more complicated for most of us while blaming a shortage of funds and manpower for not doing their job right.

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In our recent BCTA poll, "Illegal Immigration" was listed as the #1 concern for our representatives in Washington to address as a problem. Even more important that reducing the National Debt and National Defense which were #2 and 3 and way ahead of Global Warming and National Health Care. So far the Presidential Candidates and the media seem to ignore the issue.

We note some reports that some agricultural interests and labor intensive industries claiming a shortage of manpower provided through immigration. While this may be valid it should not be an excuse to turn our backs when conventional unemployment is high and with people rightfully concerned about their jobs and the economy.

We believe we speak for most Americans that the concern is not about immigration but "illegal immigration" with millions of undocumented aliens moving in and settling down and availing themselves to the benefits of U.S. citizenship.

It is proving a very serious security issue and very expensive to all of us in the form of identity theft, benefits paid, law enforcement, and schooling. How many reasons do we need?

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One of the least expensive and effective ways to promote a candidate for local political office is by having supporters submit "letters to the editor" of local papers for publication. While we trust these editors use discretion in what they print it is not always easy for candidates to make a response. When reading these letters it is always best to consider their source and draw your own

conclusions as to their purpose.

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County Officials are considering the selling of naming rights for the new Mental Health Center to offset the cost. What next? Naming schools after yourself with a big donation? Changing the names of streets? Money talks.

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Governor Doyle has signed a bill mandating that all American flags displayed at state facilities and public schools be manufactured in the USA. We don't know if this is from patriotism or helping the economy, but why don't require the state to try and purchase all products made in the USA with first choice "made in Wisconsin" to give the state's economy a boost.

* * * * *

As expected, the referendum to create a constitutional amendment to eliminate the Governor's "Frankenstein" veto passed by a large majority. Give some credit to the voters of Wisconsin.

Only problem is, the exact wording of the proposed amendment was not specified, and must first be translated into legalese. The original law which was in effect since 1931 was intended to allow the Governor to eliminate what they considered to be excessive budget items.

Recent Governors and particularly Gov. Doyle have been able to interpret their privilege to allow rampant budget increases and switching of funds from one account to the other. We will see if the final result will be able to eliminate such mischief.

* * * * *

Considering the contest was to educate voters to choose the most qualified person to serve on the State Supreme Court, the race between Judges Butler and Gableman seemed more to establish who was the least qualified for the dignified position. No doubt a sample of this falls races for control of the Legislature and Congress.

While the candidates may have intended a clean race promoting their qualifications for the job, it was special interests with millions of dollars to spend that turned it into a mud-slinging free for all. What was misleading is that the Supreme Court is not about handling criminal cases except in ultimate ap-

peals. In Wisconsin it has been more of a case of establishing political policy than fairly interpreting the law.

Gov. Doyle has proposed using public money for future Supreme Court races as they are supposed to be non-partisan. Spending taxpayer money for a race like this would probably make matters worse Wisconsin politics being what they are.

* * * * *

Governor Doyle claims the Wisconsin Hospital Association supports his plan to levy a tax on hospital services. The theory is that it would be reimbursed by the Federal Govt., and we all will come out ahead.

Maybe so, but the Federal Govt. is also scratching for money and we wonder if this is a guarantee. Either way the hospitals could use this an excuse to raise their rates which are already driving the cost of health care and insurance our of sight. Also, hospitals are generally tax exempt, but do they or could they pay a municipal tax for local services they consume. Better to pay the city than the state.

* * * * *

The media had predicted a poor turnout for the April 1, election. Let's hope that people didn't use what they read in the paper as an excuse not to vote.

* * * * *

The spring elections are now history and we congratulate the winners. We do not recall anyone running on a platform of increasing taxes in order to provide all of the services they were promising. Let's all remember this and hold them to their promises.

As usual, lots of things to wonder about.

Jim Frink - BCTA

"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."

The TAX TIMES

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The TAX TIMES - April, 2008

BCTA Meeting and Events Schedule – MARK YOUR CALENDARS.

Tuesday - April 1, 2008. Local and state elections.

DID YOU VOTE ?

Tuesday - April 15, 2008. Federal and State Income Taxes Due.
(Start working on them now.)

Thursday – April 17, 2008., Monthly BCTA Meeting, 12:00 Noon.
Titletown Brewing Co., "Frost" Room.
Speaker – Discussion of April 1, Election & Current events.

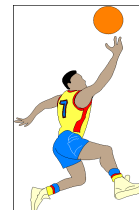
Thursday – May 15, 2008., Monthly BCTA Meeting, 12:00 Noon.
Titletown Brewing Co., "Frost" Room.
Speakers: John Gard, Former Assembly Speaker
Kate Gard, Taxpayers Network Inc.

Unless otherwise notified, BCTA monthly meetings are held the Third Thursday of each month, 12:00 Noon, at Titletown 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.



April, 2008

"All people are born alike—except
Republicans and Democrats."

, , , Groucho Marx

"Talk Is cheap—except when Con-
gress does it." . . . Anonymous

"Think how much the national debt
would be if it were not for unkept
political promises." . . Doug Larsen

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.**