

The Oxymoronic Stimulus.

“Feds send out first wave of stimulus checks, Area residents already have plans to spend the dough”

That was the headline just up U.S. 41 in Marinette the day our government began taxing our unborn great-grandchildren. They won’t know it until much, much later. They’ll be too busy enjoying their childhoods in blithe ignorance of the red ink on their toddling ledgers. But our quest for unsustainable economic growth through domestic spending will ensure our legacy will be a yoke on their shoulders.

All because we were too embarrassed to say, “Rumplestiltskin” to that little bearded man, Uncle Sam, when he came ‘round offering to spin our straw into gold.’

This is a plea to put those checks in trust accounts for your children’s children, even if you don’t know their names yet. If you must spend it, do not, under any circumstances, use it to improve your home. This would be a tragic irony: borrowing \$168 billion from your great-grandchildren so you could add to the assessed value of your home and pay higher property taxes.

And as the first checks begin arriving, Speaker Nancy Pelosi signals her desire for a second stimulus package before taking up the Colombia free trade pact that could begin creating jobs for our great-grandchildren. Jeesh! It’s like swallowing your Feenamint with Kaopectate. Washington needs to start sending out Reality checks.

Our conservative compatriots at the Beloit Daily News sent their readers a reality check in a recent editorial: “Today's America: No pain, please ... The process lays bare the great American secret: Not only are we a nation of shopaholics, we have become dependent on shopaholics. ... this is further evidence that today's Americans have little threshold for pain or sacrifice. ... THINK ABOUT THIS: The Greatest Generation is called that because they faced down the Depression, World War II, the Cold War and, meanwhile, built the world's strongest economy. And we dare call ourselves their heirs?”

I dislike taxes, but maybe we need something like a war tax to inject some pioneer spirit of shared sacrifice into our slothful American souls. This isn’t Happy Days and we’re not just cruisin’ for burgers in daddy’s new car.

Think real hard about what you’d love to buy with that \$600 to \$1,200 – and then DON’T BUY IT. Prove to yourself that you can resist. You will be surprised how proud you will feel after resisting the adrenaline rush of ‘found money.’

Tell our US Senators and Representatives, NO MORE “stimulus flimflamulus,” that’s Latin for “stop screwing our future.” This Fall send some of our local fiscal hawks to Madison to help our other Fox Valley lawmakers knock some sense into that RINO club. Let’s prove that we can do without. And this character building restraint may just apply a little downward pressure on prices.

Drop me an email and tell me what you didn’t buy at rparinsster@gmail.com .

God bless us, we can do it.

Richard Parins, President

The BROWN COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION
Promoting Fiscal Responsibility in Government

State Announces Complaint Hotline.

Perhaps sensing that common citizens can offer suggestions and bring mismanagement problems to the attention of state government, the Legislative Audit Bureau has established a telephone hotline to receive complaints. Reporting anything from alleged fraud, mismanagement of resources or wastes of taxpayer money will be welcomed.

By dialing their toll-free number **1-800-FRAUD-17 (1-800-372-8317)**, you can report cases of the state wasting money, fraud, mismanagement or offer suggestions for actually saving money. You can speak to an operator during business hours, or leave a message on their answering machine at any time. They claim callers will remain confidential, and the content of calls will be reported to the Legislature or other proper department.

It could be a good idea if maintained properly and used constructively. It should not be abused by the public. It would be helpful if the Legislature and other proper parties pay attention to what citizens have to say so that nobody will complain about the hotline being another waste of taxpayer money.

Interest on Debt 6th Largest State Expense.

Here are the largest expense items in the current state budget.

- #1 – Aid to Public Education.
- #2 – Medicaid benefits.
- #3 – University of Wisconsin System.
- #4 – Shared revenue w/local govt.
- #5 – Prisons and related expenses.
- #6 – Debt payments.

Payment on debt didn't even exist as an expense until recent years, *The current budget includes \$567 million for the payment of debt* for funds borrowed to cover shortfalls. It was not clear if this included money "transferred" from the DOT which they will have to borrow for highway construction. Debt payments will cost taxpayers more than natural resources, administration, employee retirement and other state services and agencies and will likely cost us more each year.

New York Times and BCTA Agree.

Well at least up to a point. A recent New York Times/CBS poll concluded that 81% of Americans were dissatisfied with the country's direction. In our recent BCTA membership survey, we asked, "*Presidential candidates are saying, we need a change, Do you agree?*", The result was 72.1% YES, or not too different from what the prestigious New York Times and their army of professional poll takers found.

That is mostly where the similarity ended, however. While we both seemed to agree that various government action or inaction was the cause of much dissatisfaction, the Times claimed 43% of their respondents said they would prefer a larger government providing more services. Their focus appeared to be somewhat directed at establishing a dissatisfaction with the countries direction based on the questions they presented. Raising taxes on households making over \$250K was favored by 58% to pay for programs for those making less than that amount. 68% favored trade restrictions to protect domestic industries They blamed government policy for financial problems but were skeptical of bailouts to business organizations.

A number of comparisons were used between present and past economic conditions most of their respondents did seem concerned with the future.

We used a somewhat different approach in our survey and also concluded change is in order: but in a

National Debt Update.

As of April 30, the U. S. National Debt was **\$9,339,106,387,346.79**. This is actually down a few billion from last month, but we have to take into consideration that income tax payments were due April 15, and that many members of Congress are out campaigning for reelection rather than spending money in Washington .

This debt equals \$30,730.87 for every citizen. Don't worry if this sounds like a lot. Your rebate check is supposed to be on the way.

Jim Frink – BCTA

somewhat different direction. While we asked if change was in order, we asked our respondents just what should it be rather than giving them a list to choose from. Your responses included; "*Less government-lower spending, strict immigration laws, national defense, stable economy & reduced debt, less pork and overseas spending, honest government with fiscal responsibility, restore individual rights, reduce bureaucracy, campaign finance reform, fiscal discipline, cut budgeting loopholes, back to the constitution and basic legislation, etc. etc.*"

None of our respondents said that we needed more government or services. In a different question, only 29.5% felt we needed a national health care system which is being pushed as a top priority by Senators Clinton and Obama.

In another part of our survey, we asked you to prioritize what areas our members of Congress and the Federal Government should be concerned, which should also be priorities for setting the countries direction. The results were published in our March *TAX TIMES*. In order they were: 1-Illegal Immigration, 2-reducing national debt, 3-national defense, 4-financing social security, 5-infrastructure, 6-controlling the economy, 7-developing energy sources, 8-foreign affairs, 9-campaign finance reform, 10-crime & illegal drugs, 11-universal health care, 12-federal aids to education, 13-aids to cities and states, 13-global warming. Note this list of priorities is somewhat different than we get from the news.

It could be we're just concerned with different problems than the rest of the country. **JF**

"Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it everywhere, diagnosing it incorrectly, and applying the wrong solutions." . . . **Groucho Marx**

" I have little interest in streamlining government or in making it more efficient , for I mean to reduce its size." , , , **Barry Goldwater**

"Teach a man to fish and he will live for a day. Teach a man to sue and he can live for a lifetime."

. . . **Cartoon Caption**

"Ninety percent of the politicians give the other ten percent a bad reputation." . . . **Henry Kissinger**

Presidential Candidates and Taxes.

While the presidential candidates all want us to believe we would be better off if they were elected, details of their taxing and spending plans have been sketchy at best. We can't recall any candidate running on a platform of raising taxes with the possible exception of the wealthy (whoever they are), business's who make a profit, or possibly some obscure tax nobody will ever notice.

Various sources have compiled various statements and position papers from the candidates, and offer the following evaluations on proposed taxes after the election.

Capital Gains Tax:

Clinton - 24%, McCain-15% (as is), Obama-28%.

Dividend Tax:

Clinton-39.6%, McCain-15% (as is), Obama-39.6%.

Income Tax:

Single earning \$30,000

McCain-\$4,500

Clinton & Obama-\$8,400

Married earning \$60,000

McCain-\$9,000

Clinton & Obama-\$14,000

McCain has been on record for keeping the Federal Income Tax as is, while Clinton and Obama both favor reversion to the pre-Bush tax cuts. They also have proposed new taxes on gasoline, resources consumption, and even retirement accounts. New programs proposed by the candidates will have to be paid for, and the National Debt is a problem that will have to be dealt with.

No doubt the candidates will be asked to disclose how they plan on paying for any new programs they propose while dealing with the economy. The makeup of the new Congress will also be a factor on taxes and spending.

"The public cannot be too curious concerning the character of public men."

. . . Samuel Adams

"Lotteries wouldn't be so popular if they were still known as the numbers racket."

. . . Doug Larson

"In politics, absurdity is not a handicap."

. . . Napoleon Bonapart

"You can't legislate intelligence and common sense into people."

. . . Will Rogers

Visit our Websites

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Please Pass (on) The Pork.

Every community in the country probably has its hand out for any money the Federal Government will give them; for any project that they can't quite afford on their own.

No problem, before the Federal Budget is finalized, our 537 members of Congress manage to appropriate specific funds for projects in their districts. Sort of a present for the folks back home from the rest of us. For 2008 this gift amounted to 11,610 appropriation projects totaling \$17.2 Billion of Uncle Sams Money. (*These are just the projects that could be identified.*) While not a lot of money by U.S. Government standards, it is the manner in which these expenditures are approved that is disturbing. Last year Congress adapted strict rules requiring members to disclose when they directed Federal money to pet projects, but that has only made them more creative in their requests. You vote to accept my request and I will vote for yours/

These expenditures are known as "earmarks" referring to the 16th century when cuts or marks were placed on the ears of livestock to identify their ownership. They are also called "pork-barrel" expenses for the fat involved while members of Congress call them "*Investments in America.*"

You can call them what you want but the common thread is that they are usually requested for a specific local (or political) purpose rather than the country as a whole. "Citizens Against Government Waste," a non-partisan group which tracks and publicizes earmarks in their annual "Pig Book" lists the following criteria to qualify:

- * Requested by only one chamber of Congress.
- * Not specifically authorized.
- * Not competitively awarded.
- * Not requested by the President.
- * Exceeds the President's budget request.
- * Not the subject of congressional hearings.
- * Serves only a local or special interest.

The problem is that these represent expenditures over and beyond the anticipated budget. They were not debated as to merit, necessity, affordability or benefit to the nation as a whole which is really the responsibility of Congress. If any item qualifies for government spending, it should be proposed, debated on its own merits. In other words, included in a specific appropriation bill subject to budget restrictions and approval by the Congress, Senate, and the President.

Examples of this years 11,610 items include a religious broadcasting station in Madagascar, and a program to save hawks in Haiti. There are numerous local libraries, museums, parks and memorials, research centers and school improvements. All nice but with questionable national benefit. While many members of Congress criticize the practice, they have constituents back home expecting tangible results. Sometimes there is a rather thin line between a budget appropriated item and an earmark.

The Wisconsin delegation, led by Senator Kohl who requested \$49.2 Million and Rep.. Obey of Wausau requesting \$59.9 Million were also well represented. Congressman Kagen was credited with \$6.8 Million, and only Sen. Feingold had zero. Rep. Kagen also distributed 4-color mailings "*prepared, published, and mailed at taxpayer expense*" to make constituents aware of his activities.

In all fairness, we acknowledge that Wisconsin residents pay more in Federal taxes than is returned to the state, ranking 47th. We do not have any large military bases or other facilities bringing money back into the state. Obtaining federal funding for state and local projects is often a last resort for necessary projects when other sources of revenue fail.

The real problem is the ignoring of our national debt and properly prioritizing needs from wants. Also overlooked is that much of local government spending disappears with no benefits realized. Government gifts in the form of grants are often used for other purposes than intended.

Jim Frink - BCTA

Is This A Problem Or Not?

In our annual membership survey, we asked respondents to prioritize 14 items they thought important for our representatives in Congress and the Federal Government to address. Respondents put illegal immigration at the top of list as their biggest concern. Another question asked if you agreed that *“this was not a serious problem but amnesty and citizen rights should be given to all that apply.”* Only 2.8% agreed meaning that 97.2% disagreed. Unfortunately our representatives seem unwilling or unable to do anything about the problem.

Recently the U.S. Senate voted to extend Social Security Benefits to illegal aliens beginning in 2008. Wisconsin’s Senators Feingold and Kohl agreed as did Senators Obama, Clinton and McCain. Their rationale seems to be that through employment they contribute to this citizen privilege and should share in the benefits. (*They may also be looking for votes at our expense. for future elections.*)

The question is how do people who are not citizens become eligible for citizen rights and benefits? Is there any other country in the world where one can cross the border at night and set up residency? Our government now requires a U.S. Passport from citizens returning from Canada or any place else in the world.

We can assume most people have no trouble with legal immigration, whereby quotas and criteria are established and requirements such as learning our language, history and culture are met and adhered to. Yes, most of us were immigrants at one time.

In our survey we also stated that *“immigration, employment, income tax and social security taxes should be strictly enforced.”* The majority approved. Also that English should be recognized at our official language. This means that we have no problem with controlled immigration following the same rules used by every other country on earth. This would require applicants for citizen privileges such as drivers licenses, social security; welfare benefits, voting and contributing to the tax structure to adhere to the same rules and conditions as everyone else. Difficult to understand is that our state and national governments have proof of residency and citizenship requirements in place to qualify for these privileges and they seem often to be ignored or circumvented.

Do illegal aliens represent an expense or benefit to our country? There are factors pro and con to consider. One widely read internet report estimates the overall cost at \$338 Billion per year. Other estimates include \$11-22 Billion for welfare benefits, \$12 Billion for primary and secondary education, \$90 Billion for welfare and social services, \$200 Billion in wages lost to Illegals, \$45 Billion sent back home by illegal workers, \$3 Million a day incarcerating illegal aliens, etc. etc.

Unfortunately, the crime rate of illegal aliens is somewhat higher and 30% of the federal prison system are illegals. A national security threat is present when we cannot control those crossing our borders illegally.

Part of the problem may be that no one seems to know for sure how many illegal aliens are living here, or their total impact, pro or con upon our economy.

Perhaps we should acknowledge that it is great to live in a country so good that others less fortunate want to move in with us. **JF**

“A tax loophole is something that benefits the other guy. If it benefits you, it is tax reform.” , , , **Russell R. Long**

“You’re all going to have a lot of fun the next 30 days, I’ll tell Ya.” . . . **Wis. Gov. Doyle at North Carolina Obama Rally.**

April Meeting Notes.

Monthly meeting of the Brown County Taxpayers Association April 17, 2008 at Titledown Brewing.

Chad Fradette, former president of the Green Bay City Council, spoke about changes necessary for government to become less of a financial burden on citizens. He began by noting that he has supported the BCTA and that he agreed with the BCTA request that candidates pledge not to raise taxes beyond the limits of growth and inflation.

At the state level, Chad believes that gasoline taxes should be spent only for transportation, not siphoned off to the General Fund to be spent for non-transportation projects and services. He explained that \$1.1 billion has been transferred from the state Transportation Fund to be spent for other purposes. Compounding the problem, the \$1.1 billion raided from the Transportation Fund has been replaced by bonding, which requires taxpayers to pay for interest on the bonding on top of paying off the principal sum of \$1.1 billion. This maneuver violates common sense. Government must be run with common sense and time-honored values, such as paying our bills as we go.

Chad also explained that recurring expenditures at the local government level must be placed in the general budget, not financed (with interest) into the next generation. To promote business and job growth, Chad stated that we need to streamline regulations, not give grants. Social engineering subsidies are a special problem. We must let economics take hold and stop subsidizing. If we reduce business taxes, businesses will flock to Wisconsin and flourish.

Representative Karl Van Roy reported on the budget repair bill to deal with the State’s \$416 million budget deficit. He stated that the Assembly has proposed significant spending cuts to resolve the problem. Meanwhile, Senator Decker, leading the Senate, is looking for more tax revenue, not spending cuts. Representative Van Roy also commented that judicial activism is a problem; it can erase the intent of the legislature.

The next BCTA meeting will be Thursday, May 15, at Titledown Brewing. Our speakers will former Speaker of the Legislature John Gard and Kate Gard representing Taxpayers Network, Inc. Details on the back page of this **TAX TIMES**. **Dave Nelson – Secretary**

Happy Tax Freedom Day.

Each year the Tax Foundation, a national non-partisan organization, computes each states “Tax Freedom Day.” This is the theoretical date on which the average taxpayer will have completed payment of all federal, local, and state taxes for the year, and assuming all income went for the payment of taxes. After that point he can spend his money for such items as food, housing, clothing, needs of his children, gas, retirement savings, medical expenses, etc.

This year Wisconsin’s tax freedom day was April 24, while the national average was April 23. Nonetheless Wisconsin placed 14 lowest which means 36 states paid less tax in relation to their incomes.

Things That Make Us Wonder.

As the state budget shortfall keeps looking worse and worse, the best solution might still be staring the Legislature in the face. Last year the states revenue secretary estimated the gap between is owed the state in taxes and what is collected is \$3-4 Billion per year. That's a lot of money and far more that we are short.

While much of this may be difficult to collect such as internet sales taxes or the underground economy, better enforcement of existing laws and public relations could go a long way. First, individuals and business's require an income in order to owe taxes. You are responsible for filing returns to establish the amount of taxable income and should have nothing to fear with good records. Collecting what is due should be preferable to finding new things to tax.

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While the owners of the Dairyland dog track near Kenosha keep trying to open a casino on their property, they claim to be losing \$2-3 Million per year on their operation.. They blame poor business and competition from Indian casinos offering full scale gambling.

They are the only one of five dog tracks left in the state. Recall they were built with private money about 20 years ago as a cooperative effort to bring revenue to the state and provide a limited gambling opportunity for Wisconsin residents.

You know how that turned out.

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New Jersey is close to enacting a plan making it mandatory for employers to offer six weeks paid leave to workers wishing to care for a new child or sick relative. Like Wisconsin, New Jersey has a serious budget problem and is encountering problems with business development and retention.

While this may be a good idea for workers and organizers labor to champion, it could be disastrous for business already absorbing huge cost increases in insurance and other employee benefits. Even though well intended, such benefits are always subject

to abuse by employees seeking some extra paid vacation. If caring for sick relatives is a problem for employees, they should be able to work it out with their employer on a case by case basis without out government mandates.

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While New Jersey is discouraging business by mandating workers time off, they have initiated a bonding plan from the Gov. Doyle playbook.

They would receive \$38 Billion from the sale of bonds to pay indebtedness, and raise highway toll fees and use those proceeds to pay the bonds.

In other words, revenue intended for highway spending will go to the general fund. Sound familiar?

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The Federal Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality ranks Wisconsin as No. 2 nationally in overall health care quality, just behind Minnesota. This is based on comparisons for 15 measures of quality and speaks well for health care quality in Wisconsin.

WISTAX has just released a report analyzing health care, and disclosed that Wisconsin has the 2d lowest number of residents without health insurance of any state, which is also good. This comes at a cost, however. Hospital care spending per capita is 8.3% higher in Wisconsin than the national average, and we rank 17th nationally in relation of health care spending to state product. It is estimated that in 2004 healthcare expenses in Wisconsin totaled \$5,610 per person. Presently 14.8% of state product goes to health care, up from 9.4% in 1985.

Reasons given in the WISTAX report for the increase in medical costs are population growth, general and medical inflation, medical research and an aging population, They did not mention government and insurance paperwork, lawsuits and malpractice insurance, or the mandatory payments by Medicare, Medicaid, and other agencies making it necessary to prices and insurance for other patients.

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Unruly protesters around the world have been disrupting the Olympic torch relay, blaming China's human rights policies. It would be interesting to see where the clothes

these protesters wear plus most other things they buy was made.

We certainly don't agree with China's employee management methods, but If someone wants to demonstrate perhaps they should do it in front of Walmart or just about any retailer who sells products imported from countries which upset our balance of trade and which we have become dependent for many of the consumable products we buy.

The Olympics may not be a taxpayer issue but our economy is.

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Green Bay's downtown development is a constant work in progress with no real end in sight,. Millions of dollars have been expended by taxpayers and various developers from the time the old downtown was leveled to make room for the failed mall. It has been obvious for some time that parking meter revenues would be insufficient to cover the cost. The present focus seems to favor offices and residential construction.

We have had capable people looking after the best interests of the future of the city and taxpayers although owing \$5 Million to Younkers owners will take explanation. So far progress has been orderly with no evidence of anyone taking advantage of the development for personal gain.

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Gov. Doyle has issued a directive to state agencies stop using social security numbers as identification for state programs. They are still trying to come up with a unique ID# to prevent fraud and properly identify program customers.

In the meantime, some agencies have experience difficulties with their clients because so much information was being "blacked out" for security reasons. This is particularly true with the Dept. of Revenue identifying cash flow for tax returns.

None the less, the state still has a policy of selling lists containing names and addresses of people who apply for various licenses and other criteria to private enterprises.

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One good thing the Wisconsin
Continued on Next page →

legislature did was pass a bill that allows municipalities to post only a summary of new ordinances in the local paper rather than the entire text. Supposed to save money and they must have found no one reads them anyway.

One problem, especially on the state and national level is that the brief descriptions our representative and the media use to describe new legislation and the ominous final result which may be several hundred pages long could contain clauses and provisions deliberately worded to be contrary to what you think you are getting.

A summary would only tell half the story. One suggestion is to post them on E-mail which would be far less expensive than the newspaper yet be available for those interested,

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Various groups in Wisconsin have been experimenting with methane gas produced from cow manure to create electricity. So far environmentalists haven't complained. At present there are 18 facilities operating producing enough electricity to provide power to 5,500 home. Great idea if they can figure out where to keep and how to feed all the cows.

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It was estimated that \$4.8 Million was spent for advertising by outside interest groups in the recent supreme court race which was won by Judge Mike Gableman. Far more than spent by the candidates themselves. While Gableman received 51.2% of the state vote, he only received 28% in Dane County.

While this may prove that Dane County and the rest of Wisconsin don't always agree politically, the results immediately brought calls from the losers that Supreme Court races be financed at public expense. How this would clean up the advertising or stop special interest ads on behalf of the candidates was not made clear.

The Supreme Court is considered non-partisan, but the decisions the court makes can have implications effecting us all far beyond interpreting the State Constitution.

Whether the method used for nominees to the U.S. Supreme Court whereby the President makes nomi-

nations subject to approval of the Senate works better is questionable.

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It is always puzzling how a telephone poll of 1 out of 100,000 people can claim to be 98% accurate in predicting the outcome of an important election, but we see it every day in the paper or hear it presented as fact on the news. Often the source of the poll or questions asked are not disclosed but we always believe it.

Somewhat similar but just as questionable is that 20% of the population can decide who represents us on our City Council, County Board, or State Supreme Court. Despite all of the publicity that is the percentage of Wisconsin's eligible voters who bothered to cast ballots April 1. This 20% made the decision for the rest of us.

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The price of gasoline keeps rising almost on a daily basis, and it seems that no one, including the government can do anything about it.

While we wonder if predictions of \$4.00 gas this summer have encouraged oil companies to raise their prices accordingly, the real problem may be what it will cost next year and the years after that. Perhaps we should be more concerned with conservation than scratching for every last drop of oil we have now.

Sen. McCains suggestion of a summer moratorium from the Federal gas tax may sound nice, but even if it became a reality it would only encourage people to waste more precious energy, making the situation worse.

A better solution could be a crash program (*like the WWII Manhattan Project*) to develop potential sources such as hydrogen, etc., to make them realistic and practical. There has to be better ideas than ethanol, methane from cow manure, or biofuel from table scraps to keep things moving in the future.

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Another thought on the price of gasoline. It seems that many if not most of municipal and state tax increases during the past few years were blamed on the high cost of employees health insurance and benefits.

This trend will likely continue.

Now what is going to happen due to the high price of gas and other energy. A large part of the costs of police and fire protection, busing children to school is for gasoline. It also figures in the cost of highway and building construction plus the purchases of anything which is shipped by truck.

No doubt this will result as a big excuse for tax increases on all levels.

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It was nice to see huge crowds in Washington and New York honoring Pope Benedict XVI rather than protesting something or another.

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When the Madison School District wanted a stoplight placed in front of an elementary school, the work was done by the city as usual.

However the city then assessed the school district \$58,000 for the work because it was not in the city budget. The same for various sidewalk and street improvements for other schools in the district.

While this may cause problems for the school district budget and save the city money either way the taxpayer gets stuck with the bill.

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A recent news items concerned a police raid on a religious colony in Texas whereby 416 children were placed in protective custody.

At a hearing to attempt to establish the facts of the case, 350 lawyers were present seeking some business.

Either this is good because it provides employment for 350 people or bad because there are too many lawyers looking for clients.

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Plans are underway to begin widening I-94 between Milwaukee and the Illinois State Line. Welcome news to anyone who travels the road. The estimated cost was listed at \$1.9 Billion.

Now may be the time to force Gov. Doyle to return the money he took from the transportation fund for other purposes as the final cost to taxpayers to borrow \$1.9 Billion will probably be at least double that amount.

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Every year there are a number

of disastrous hurricanes along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts. People rebuild and wait for the next storm to come along.

To what extent is the government responsible for paying for the damage? Hurricane Katrina has cost taxpayers \$80 Billion and the bills are still coming in. We expect the government to provide emergency services and maintain the infrastructure but are they responsible for real estate and personal property of people who live in coastal areas on their own accord?

Due to population growth and real estate values it is estimated storm damage losses double every ten years.

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No doubt it is just a handful of Green Bay landlords responsible for the majority of complaints by renters and city ordinance violations. Now the city is considering an apartment registration plan to make it easier to inspect and keep track of rental units. Maybe a valid idea but creating another level of government to pay for and contend with.

Unfortunately it is not as easy for landlords to deal with problem tenants who also cause problems.

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An article from the Capital Times reports hospitals around the state have also experienced huge increases in interest rates on their bonded debt. What was 3.5% has gone to 7-8% and higher.

Obviously this effects the cost of health care. The hospitals in Wisconsin are great and enhance our reputation for giving excellent service. An observation however, is that sometimes they do seem to go overboard with their spending, just to keep one step ahead of the competition.

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Of the 61 School related referendums on the April 1, ballot in Wisconsin, 30 were approved and 31 failed. Generally those which requested additional spending for operating expenses passed while those asking permission for capital improvement or new construction failed.

One observation is that when the school districts presented all the facts to the voters without any frills the referendum had better chances of passing. When they prepare a wish list it has to be something taxpayers will agree with and approve.

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The Governor of Indiana re-

cently signed a property reform law which is quite interesting. Under the new law, homeowners property taxes would be capped at 1% of assessed value, rental properties at 2% and business at 3%. It was not made clear how local municipalities, schools, etc., would split the proceeds or how the state would reimburse for the lost revenue. At the same time the states sales tax was increased from 6 to 7%.

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The Press-Gazette made note of the amount of property which has changed hands in the county during the past year, including the \$30 million or so spent by the Packers to purchase land in the vicinity of Lambeau Field for future use.

IF we recall correctly, the same legislation that established the .5% county sales tax for Lambeau Field improvement also made real estate owned by sports teams exempt from property tax.

In other words, this property valuation could possibly be removed from the Ashwaubenon tax rolls.

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One way Wisconsin gets a share of Federal Government spending is through goods and services provided by state industry. Examples are navy ships produced by Marinette Marine or trucks produced in Oshkosh.

Sometimes even more money comes to the state than originally anticipated. An article in the April 23, **New York Times** entitled "How Not to Build a Navy Ship" reports a ship under construction in Marinette has been delayed several months with hundreds of millions in cost overruns.

Not because of our workmanship but because of design changes by the navy as work proceeds. OK as long as the people in Marinette get paid.

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Comparing public employees salary and benefit packages with private sector has always been an argument against the high taxes we pay.

The Journal-Sentinel has reported that 119 state employees actually earned more than the Governor last year. While many of these were professionals who could possibly do better elsewhere, one nurse at the Milwaukee Secure Detention Facility made over \$225,000 including \$110,000 overtime. She said they were understaffed.

Some have interpreted the report to indicate that Governor Doyle is underpaid. His salary was \$136,353, but includes a rent-free 34 room mansion, personal chauffeur, security detail, access to a state plane and overseas trips for trade missions. In private industry these perks would likely be considered as taxable income.

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The combination of state, city and county sales taxes have driven the total sales tax in the City of Chicago to 10.25%. An article in the Journal/Sentinel says Wisconsin business should advertise and take advantage of this from all of the Illinois tourists to our state. It's also a good reason not to shop in Chicago.

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Back in September, before the home mortgage crisis was a crisis and the price gas was still a little more affordable, Congress decided to make college a little more affordable and also reduce the amount of student loans outstanding by lowering the interest rate on new and outstanding loans.

A very nice gesture as it made it easier for students to borrow money for their education and gave our colleges and universities more students to keep their institutions in business.

Only problem was the cost of borrowing money at low interest rates will cost taxpayers over a billion dollars a year.

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 welcome as well as suggestions for items to include in this section of the "TAX TIMES."

"Nothing is as admirable in politics as a short memory."

. . . John Kenneth Galbreath

The TAX TIMES

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Is This A Problem Or Not?
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Things That Make Us Wonder.
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The TAX TIMES - May, 2008

BCTA Meeting and Events Schedule – MARK YOUR CALENDARS.

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 Ind.

Thursday - June 19, 2008., Monthly BCTA Meeting, 12:00 Noon.
Titletown Brewing Co., “Frost” Room
Program to be announced.

Thursday - July 17, 2008., Monthly BCTA Meeting, 12:00 Noon.
Titletown Brewing Co., “Frost” Room
Program to be announced.

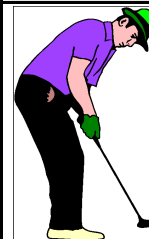
Unless otherwise notified, BCTA monthly meetings are held the Third Thursday of each month, 12:00 Noon, at Titletown Brewing Co., 200 Dousman St.

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” \$8.00, Payable at meeting. Includes lunch, tax & tip.
(Note: \$1.00 price increase as of May, 2008 meeting.)

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



MAY,
2008

“Many people consider the things which government does for them to be social progress but they consider the things that government does for others to be socialism.” . . . Earl Warren

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

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.**