

Sustainability.

Sustainability is hot. The word has "legs". Everyone's jumping on the band wagon. Since the "S" movement springs from environmental advocacy, let's look to the U.S. EPA website for the definition:

Sustainability means "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Most of the chatter we hear about sustainability relates to consumption of resources, waste disposal, and "carbon footprint". The latter attempts to assign responsibility for CO2 emissions, intending to reverse the human-caused global warming which has been "proven" by an Al Gore movie and climate computer models which are changed each time they prove to be wrong. Scientific evidence? None.

But you can't argue with the thinking behind EPA's concept of sustainability. We should meet our needs today in ways which won't prevent the kids from having a good life as well. We're not doing that, however, and it has nothing to do with how "green" we are. The true sustainability issue for our time is government entitlement spending.

Wisconsin Congressman Paul Ryan has developed a plan for spending constraint and tax reform he calls "A Roadmap for America's Future". Ryan's solutions, which I will not go into here, can be debated. What is not debatable are the cold hard facts that create the need for initiatives like Ryan's. At his website www.americanroadmap.org, Ryan cites the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) "Long-term Budget Outlook" issued last December. Under current law and tax code federal debt, now at 37% of GDP, will rise to 109% of GDP by 2031, just 23 years away. By mid-century federal spending will pass 40% of GDP. In Ryan's words, "by 2060, the economy enters a free-fall, and CBO cannot model the economic impact later in that decade because debt rises to levels the economy cannot support".

Very well, you say. But we can avoid all this debt and economic ruin if we just raise taxes, right? Wrong. The CBO report says that funding current law's ever increasing entitlement spending with higher taxes would require tax rates beyond that which the economy can support. After seeing Ryan's report, the Wisconsin State Journal editorialized the following:

"If you are 30 years of age or younger, pay close attention. If the federal government maintains the status quo in spending, it will virtually assure that just when you are in your peak earning years, around 2030, your taxes will be at least 33 percent higher than they are now. That's just to maintain existing programs, without any new initiatives. So much for your peak earnings. So much for the life-style you expect. And it gets worse for your children. A lot worse. This is not a speculation. This is not about partisan politics. This is math. Just add up the unfunded promises".

We do have a sustainability problem, an urgent one. But it's not about wind turbines, polar bears or Al Gore nonsense. It's about economic calamity. If you think you can stomach the grim picture, I invite you to visit the website www.americanroadmap.org, and click on "What's the Problem?"

BROWN COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION.

Tom Sladek, Director

(Richard Parins is on a well-earned vacation, and asked Tom to write this issue's cover message.)

The BROWN COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION
Promoting Fiscal Responsibility in Government

Speaking of Hidden Taxes.

For some reason, our government gets away with paying doctors and hospitals less than they bill. The rest of us pay more because the government doesn't pay what everyone else pays. Our government dictates what they are going to pay (and the left wants to dictate even more of our health care to make it better. Somehow.)

This government underpayment is a hidden tax that everyone who is not on a government program pays whenever they see a doctor or go to the hospital.

This is a scam. When the government buys cars, telephone services, roads, bridges or military equipment, the services are put out for bid. For all services except health care, the government pays the going rate. The price the government pays is generally about the same as any major purchaser of the goods or services. Sometimes they pay even more, remember the \$800 hammer?

For health care, the government dictates the low-ball price paid. For instance, in the city of Green Bay, the four major hospitals bill over \$1.2 billion a year. These four hospitals collect about half, a little over \$600 million.

It is interesting that insurance companies negotiate their bills, and pay about 75% of what they are billed by hospitals. Medicare pays about 35% of their bill charges. Medicaid, the state's program for poor people (including BadgerCare and BadgerCare Plus) pays about 25% of the billed charges.

Because our government underpays so much, you and I and everyone not on a government program, the majority of us, (about 65%) pay anywhere from 20 to 40% more. If Medicaid and Medicare paid what everyone else pays, we could lower our health costs immediately by 20 to 40%.

What Medicare and Medicaid are doing in the marketplace is wrong. Wrong for our government to offer an incredibly low reimbursement rate and to tell providers to "take it or leave it." By law they can't "leave it" when it is an emergency.

Some politicians and the media would like you to believe that getting more people on government programs is the answer. By getting them on a program we would save large amounts of money. Somehow.

The fact is that in Green Bay the four hospitals write off less than 4% for charity. The real charity case, the media and some politicians aren't talking about, is the chintzy reimbursement rates of government programs. Instead of advocating and talking about how to increase reimbursement rates they are talking about how to add people to these programs.

It gets even better. They claim they can add lots more people to government programs and it will not cost more, but the same or maybe even less.

Why doesn't our left-leaning media challenge them on this? (any of you media types who are reading this? I am interested in your answer.)

I am surprised that no politician has proposed a Gasaid or Gascare program yet. After all, getting to and from the grocery store, work, or the hospital (visiting grandma?) is a right, isn't it?

If we had such a program, for everyone on Medicaid, the government-issued cards would entitle the holder to get gas for a

buck a gallon. For those on Medicare, the Gascare card would get gasoline for a buck thirty a gallon. Problem solved. (Well, sort of.)

If gas stations would honor these cards and provide gas, the rest of the cost would need to be shifted to those of us who don't have the wonderful, magic cards.

I wonder how you would feel paying even more for gas than now so that the next guy could get gas below cost.

The reason the government can't do a gas scam like the Medicaid scam is that gas stations wouldn't accept this, nor would the general public.

One of the most important things our government could do to reform health care cost and availability to most Americans would be to aggressively work toward paying the full freight. To work towards paying roughly the same price that everyone else pays for health services. This would be the honest thing, the right thing, and the American thing to do. This would make pricing in the medical community more reasonable, understandable and less costly for the majority.

It would make medical insurance more affordable to the vast majority of American citizens.

Representative Frank Lasee, 2nd Assembly District.

Are Public and Private Salaries Comparable?

A report from The Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates that the average salaries for public sector employees averages about 50% higher than the private sector.

The problem with this comparison is that it includes all private and public employees, which includes the large numbers of minimum wage workers in the service industries, etc.

| | Average hourly salary | Average hourly benefits | Total |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|---------|
| Private Sector | \$18.42 | \$ 7.66 | \$26.08 |
| Public Sector | \$26.26 | \$13.24 | \$39.50 |

"State Legislature" magazine recently compared private and public professional and service employees. Public professionals including teachers, judicial and legal employees with the results that total compensation including benefits was about the same. However there was a huge difference in what was considered "service employees."

Private service employee average salaries was listed as \$11.09 per hour plus \$4.61 benefits for a total of \$15.70 while the public sector paid \$18.45 per hour with \$12.29 benefits for \$30.74 total.

Many comparisons are difficult to make, due to geographic location, education requirements, supply and demand, etc. It is difficult to compare a law enforcement officer with a skilled factory worker or a teacher with an accountant. Possibly the biggest difference are the benefits in the public sector, and their workers ability to sway public opinion. It creates a challenge for taxpayers and budgets in all levels of government.

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 Frink@ExecPC.Com.

Immigration Reform in Wisconsin.

One question folks frequently ask me is what is being done to address the problem of illegal immigration. Unfortunately, we in the state legislature are limited in what we can do because this is primarily a federal issue that requires action by Congress. However, that doesn't mean the state shouldn't explore ways to step in and help with this growing problem that is negatively impacting ordinary law-abiding citizens.

Full Funding for REAL I.D. : In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, the nonpartisan 9/11 Commission discovered that most of the terrorists who attacked our country were here illegally, but several of them had state-issued driver's licenses. One of the most important proposals recommended by the Commission was the REAL ID Act, which was signed into federal law by President Bush in 2005. In the 2005-2006 legislative session, we passed a law requiring Wisconsin to comply with this federal mandate. In our most recent state budget, we approved full funding to implement the provisions of the law.

Under this law, the Department of Transportation (DOT) is prohibited from issuing or renewing drivers' licenses belonging to individuals who cannot provide documentary proof of U.S. citizenship or legal alien status. A driver's license is a standard form of identification accepted in today's world for everything from cashing checks to getting through airport security. By providing full funding to implement this law, our drivers' licenses will become a more valid form of identification, making it difficult for illegal aliens, especially terrorists, to elude law enforcement officials by obtaining fraudulent identification.

Denying In-State Tuition to Illegal Aliens: Given how difficult it has become for many of our own citizens to attend college due to the rising cost of tuition, it is simply unfair to use your hard-earned tax dollars to subsidize the education of illegal aliens who are not even rightfully in our country, much less our state. While this makes sense to you and me, both Governor Doyle and Senate Democrats submitted budget proposals to provide in-state resident tuition to illegal aliens who attend UW system schools or technical colleges. Fortunately for taxpayers, the Assembly was successful in defeating this provision. No Wisconsin child should be asked to take a back seat to someone that doesn't respect the laws and sovereignty of our country.

Banning Sanctuary Cities: No policy puts U.S. citizens at a greater risk to the danger posed by criminal illegal aliens than that of "sanctuary cities." This misguided policy prohibits government employees from inquiring as to the citizenship status of individuals seeking public services or those who have been arrested for criminal behavior. Madison, Wisconsin is one of a few sanctuary cities in the U.S. that provides a safe haven for illegal aliens. This means that illegal aliens can get public benefits and criminal aliens cannot be reported to federal agencies such as Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Sanctuary city policies prevent law enforcement from doing its job of protecting legal residents from violent illegal aliens. There have been numerous well-documented cases of violent crimes committed by illegal aliens in these sanctuary cities.

The Assembly approved a bill to prohibit municipalities and counties from adopting policies which make them

"sanctuary cities" for illegal aliens. The Senate has not yet acted on this bill.

Reporting Criminal Illegal Aliens To Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE): Under federal law, all aliens who commit crimes, regardless if they are in the country legally or illegally, can be deported to their homelands. Most often they are not due to a lack of coordination between local and federal officials.

The Assembly version of the budget sought to address this problem by requiring county sheriffs to check the legal status of every individual charged with a felony or drunk driving offense and to notify federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement if the individual is not legally in the U.S. At that point, the federal government could take responsibility by assuming physical custody of the individual, deporting the criminal, or providing financial reimbursement to the state and counties for the prison or jail costs associated with housing illegal aliens.

The Senate rejected this provision during the budget negotiations. Subsequent to that, I authored a stand-alone bill, AB 711, which would have implemented this same provision into law. Although this bill did not make it to the Assembly floor for a vote by the end of session, I do intend to revisit this issue next session. It is one thing for illegal aliens to break our laws by being in our country, but quite another when they threaten the safety of our communities and victimize our citizens.

We cannot afford to continue housing and providing for the illegal aliens that are incarcerated in Wisconsin's jails and prisons. Yet, at the same time we cannot afford to release them back into our communities where they pose a great threat to our citizens. Therefore, I introduced a bill that would require the Secretary of the Department of Corrections to enter into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the U.S. Attorney General and the federal Department of Homeland Security to train our corrections employees and give them the same authority as federal agents to investigate, apprehend, or detain illegal aliens who commit crimes.

Rejecting Public Benefits to Illegal Aliens: While immigration reform has primarily been addressed as a public safety issue, one must not forget about the enormous burden shouldered by the taxpayers. According to University of Oregon business professor, Philip Romero, "Illegal immigrants absorb far more in government support than what they provide in tax dollars - by a margin of at least eight to one."

In response to alarming statistics such as this, the Assembly approved a provision in the budget requiring documentary proof of citizenship or satisfactory immigration status as a condition of eligibility for certain public assistance programs. While most in this state are willing to help others in need, they also feel that we should put the needs of our own citizens first and not let those here illegally cut to the front of the line ahead of those who have followed the rules to come to America legitimately. This policy protects the pocketbook of hardworking taxpayers and it discourages people from coming into Wisconsin illegally just to get a free hand-out. Unfortunately, the Senate Democrats defeated this proposal so it was not included in the final compromise version of the budget.

State Representative Karl Van Roy

An idea to promote more efficient government.

There is a way to cut almost any state agency or department in half in about three years, with the employees cooperating enthusiastically and willingly, and with an improvement in efficiency.

The normal system for funding any government bureau is for that bureau to propose the budget for their next fiscal year. This budget is most always larger than the current budget. It is a well known and quite understandable reaction of any bureau to make sure that the current year's budget has been spent by the end of the fiscal year. This often leads to a last minute buying splurge, since the agency doesn't want to lose the money.

What I'm proposing is the establishing of a new budgeting policy for each department. The new policy would take any unspent budgeted funds at the end of the fiscal year and split them with the people in the department. Then, the lower budget figure would be used for the next fiscal year, with, again, any unspent surplus being distributed to the employees who made the surplus possible. Personal interest would have every employee watching for any possible waste.

The hiring of new personnel would be virtually eliminated, retiring employees would not be replaced, and poor or troublesome workers would not be tolerated.

No money would be saved the first year, but from then on every department would have continuously lowering budgets. Could the cost of running the state be cut in half in three years? Quite possibly. The bottom line would be far more efficient and less costly state services.

Resolution on Efficient Government Agencies

WHEREAS better government tends to be less government, and WHEREAS all bureaucracies tend to expand, with more and more people tending to do less and less work, and

WHEREAS the normal system for funding any government bureau is for that bureau to propose the budget for their next fiscal year, and that this budget is always larger than the current budget, and

WHEREAS it is a well known and quite understandable reaction of any bureau to make sure that the current year's budget has been spent by the end of the fiscal year, even on unnecessary projects, else they lose it, and

WHEREAS personal interest should have every employee watching for any possible waste of the taxpayer's dollars,

THEREFORE a new budgeting policy for each bureau shall be established, and THEREFORE any unspent budgeted funds at the end of the fiscal year shall be equally divided up and paid out to all of the employees in that bureau, and

THEREFORE, then the lower budget figure, pre-disbursement, would be used for the next fiscal year, with, again, any unspent surplus being distributed to the employees who made the surplus possible.

Submitted by Herbert Ripka for BCTA.

"The American people will never knowingly adopt Socialism. But under the name of 'liberalism' they will adopt every fragment of the Socialism Program, until one day America will be a Socialist nation without knowing how it happened."

. . . Norman Thomas"

"Who ever said that it is the responsibility of government to make life easy?"

. . . Jim Garaghty

One Law Too Many.

A *Peoples Forum* letter, prior to a recent Allouez Village Board meeting, apparently prompted an ill advised Sexual Predator Ordinance submission by one of the Trustees.

To the credit of five Board Members, neither the "Sky is Falling" as suggested in the letter, or the appearance by the writer at the board meeting, made sheep of the Village Board for another ill advised and unnecessary ordinance.

The statistics in the letter and presented to the board were misleading and inaccurate...perhaps to inspire fear among parents with young children. Officer Flannery, who attended the meeting had accurate statistics

As the father of five boys and a girl, I can understand the feeling. Irrational as it is. I had such an incident in my own family many years ago.

No hard count of predators is possible: many are family, close friends or neighbors, in addition to those already known.

The claim that those identified, will now move to Allouez due to the local ordinances by Green Bay and Ashwaubenon, carries no weight-mainly because Allouez has top shelf law enforcement that keeps a close check on those known to live there. Instead, many would simply choose to go underground which could far worse.

My past activities have included many long nights as a member of the County Board Protection Committee, through the courtesy of both County Sheriff Pieschek, GB Chief Erickson, and the State Patrol, riding with officers to better understand their duties and problems.. Through that and being involved with Golden House, I worked with Tom Hinz, Judge Peter Naze and others, to create the first Domestic Abuse Law. That was badly needed and became State Law, through our efforts and those of Rep. Mary Lou Van Dreef. I also spent many years as a member of several state prison committees, so I think my opinion carries some weight.

This bad knee jerk ordinance is definitely not needed, and I have no doubt...was politically inspired. I know of several City Council Members who would agree.

Otto C. Junkermann - BCTA

National Debt Update.

On June 1, 2008, the U.S. National Debt has risen to **\$9,396,244,785,762.26**. At least that's what the government tells us. It appears they lost track several years ago. It's up \$67 + Billion from last month at this time, and has been increasing \$1.57 Billion per day since Sept. of 2007. That's an increase of about \$5.20 per day per person, or \$1,898 per year for each of us. About the same as the increase in the price of gas is costing. That doesn't seem to bother Congress any. What's in your wallet?

VISIT OUR WEBSITE

www.BCTAxpayers.Org

E Mail, BCTA@ExecPc.Com

May Meeting Notes.

John Gard Addresses BCTA.

Monthly BCTA meeting conducted May 15, at Tiletown Brewing.

John Gard, former Speaker of the Wisconsin Assembly, and currently a candidate for the Eighth Congressional District seat, shared his perspectives on several current taxpayer issues.

John expressed consternation that 70 percent of the spending in the bloated farm bill passed by Congress had nothing to do with farming. He noted that 11,737 earmarks had passed this session of Congress prior to the farm bill. For 2008, he is gravely concerned that this election might open the door to unlimited entitlement expansion. He noted that, as Speaker of the Assembly, he was able to stop state employee contracts with no healthcare co-payments from the employees. For this, John and his family received substantial harassment from some state employees, but he felt it was worth it to reduce the burden on Wisconsin taxpayers and set a new direction for controlling healthcare costs. He also expressed satisfaction that during his four-year term as Speaker of the Assembly, no non-fiscal items were included in the state budget.

John does not expect much from the stimulus payments; but instead we should be cutting taxes to stimulate the economy. He believes that we could raise our standard of living by cutting taxes and reducing the cost of government.

Responding to a question about controlling lobbyists in Washington, D.C., he stated that all expenditures should be publicized immediately and that the Wis-

consin ethics standards should be applied to Washington.

On immigration, John expressed his complete commitment to securing our borders. He believes that our common language is a strength for the United States. He noted that our present congressman voted for free housing, and then voted against the ban on sanctuary cities for illegal aliens.

In regards to terrorism, he stated that we must be smarter and more dedicated than the terrorists if we are to survive. He believes that General Petraeus should be running the war in Iraq, not Congress.

In conclusion, John emphasized that we must look for American solutions, not Republican or Democratic solutions to problems.

Rich Carlstedt alerted members about the Green Bay School District's Community Services Fund, which legally allows bonding for expenditures without public approval. These funds are outside the budget, but included in property taxes. The District spent \$1.5 million in this manner in the last year. Rich also voiced his continuing concerns about the District's \$61 million backlog of overdue maintenance items.

Copies of the 2008 50 State Comparison booklet were distributed to those in attendance courtesy of Taxpayers Network Inc.

The next BCTA meeting is scheduled for June 19, at Tiletown Brewing. There will not be a July **TAX TIMES**, but there will be a regular meeting on Thursday, July 17. Speakers are being arranged, and all candidates for office as well as current public officials are always invited to attend our meetings and be recognized.

Dave Nelson – Secretary

"If you think health care is expensive now, wait until you see what it costs when it's free."

. . . **P. J. O'Rourke**

"We are apt to be deluded into false security by political catchwords, devised to flatter rather than instruct."

. . . **James A. Garfield**

"Government is not the doctor, it is the disease."

. . . **H. S. Ferns**

Report Card on Wisconsin.

There are a couple of recent booklets comparing the economy of Wisconsin with the other 49 states. They indicate what is good about our state and where improvement is possible. They should be required reading for the legislature and state officials in Madison looking for ways to make things better.

The first is the 2008 edition of the 50 state comparisons published by the Green Bay based Taxpayers Network Inc. While in most areas Wisconsin ranks somewhere in the middle, our ranking of 8th (11th in some reports) ranking of percentage of income spent for state and local taxes in disturbing.

Our ranking of 15th in state debt per capita, 17th in govt. pay per employee, and 14th in average expenditure per public school pupil seem somewhat out of line.

The other is a booklet called "*Measuring Success*" from the Wisconsin Taxpayer Alliance. Producing \$225 Billion in goods and products annually. If Wisconsin were an independent country, it would have one of the top 30 economies in the world.

There are still areas for improvement however. Our 5 year record of economic growth is somewhat behind the national average. Same with our growth of employment. While a strong agricultural state, our share of farm income has been declining.

Other negative factors are that our cost of living is above the national average. Our bond rating which determines the risk factor deciding interest rates on borrowing money is the lowest of our neighboring states. As the economy changes, the number of manufacturing jobs in the state has been steadily declining. Investment in Research and Development and high-tech employment is behind the national average and less than our neighboring states.

However, in spite of the negative factors effecting our economy we are ahead in several significant areas. While per capita is less than the national average, for some reason household income is above the national average. Perhaps more spouses have to work. Unemployment rates are near the national average. Our percentage of uninsured persons is below the national average. Home ownership rates have fallen but are still above the average. The poverty rate is below average.

Student test scores are high, high school graduation rates are way above average as well as college attendance. All in all Wisconsin is still a great place to live.

Where our gas money goes @ \$4.00 Gallon.

| | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Taxes | 11 % |
| Distribution & Marketing | 6 % |
| Refining | 10 % |
| Crude Oil | <u>73 %</u> 100 % |

Source: Energy Information Administration.

Things That Make Us Wonder.

Some of the major airlines have discovered by slowing down their air speeds "just a little", adding just a few minutes to flights they were able to save considerable amounts of fuel, amounting to several hundred dollars per flight.

One question is, why did it take so long for them to figure this out? Same thing applies to trucks and autos.

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While the trucking industry is calling for a nationwide 65 MPH speed limit to save gas, Green Bays Schneider National has already imposed a 60 MPH limit on its fleet of 10,000 trucks. They estimate it will save at least 75 million gallons of gasoline annually. Only problem is they may be holding up traffic unless other drivers learn the value of slowing down a little bit.

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As if things aren't already complicated enough, a U.S. District Court of Appeals has ruled that U.S. currency discriminates against blind people because there is no for them to determine the denomination. They should be different sizes, different weight paper, have Braille imprints or whatever.

Not to be cynical, but most of the blind people I have known prided themselves on being able to identify currency denominations by their own methods such as folding it in a certain way.

What next? Our currency is printed in English so perhaps we could print it in English and Spanish like Canada which has English and French.

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The California Supreme Court has ruled that same sex marriages are legal in that state. The status of these "married" couples if they move to another state was not made clear. A lot of our existing laws would have to be rewritten and clarified

This is probably more of a moral than a taxpayer issue except that it could add considerable expenses to government and industrial payrolls in the form of dependent benefits.

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There seems to be no limit to well-intended proposals that sound good

on paper but difficult to implement.

The U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security has observed that small boats have been used by terrorists to approach and threaten larger vessels. One solution would be a database of all small boats in the country and require their operators to carry identification.

So far they haven't figured out the definition of a small boat, of how to enforce their plan. Wisconsin has 600,000 boats registered that could go into the database..

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On May 5, the cost of mailing a first class letter went up another penny to .42 cents. We acknowledge that in recent years the USPS has done a lot to update their equipment and methods to remain competitive. With competition from E-mail and private services they have also become more efficient in the use of their personal. This is all for the best.

It still seems there are many things they could do to truly cut more costs if they really wanted to. Is Saturday delivery really necessary? Another dark area is their rate structure. We acknowledge that the distribution of information through newspapers, books and magazines is a necessary public service. Dozens of rate schedules apply to newspapers, magazines, non-profit organizations, advertising flyers and just about anybody who has something to mail. Even though pre-sorting and special preparation is required this mail still gets delivered at a fraction of what it costs to mail a first class letter.

What is puzzling in that an individual has to pay extra for each ounce their letter weighs, whether it is going across town or across the country, while newspapers, magazines and the like go at the same rate regardless of their weight or volume of advertising.

An example is the cost for the first ounce of first class mail increased from .29 to .42 cents during the past 15 years, while the cost of mailing the TAX TIMES which can weigh up to four ounces only increased seven cents. We are sure that there are other things the Post Office could do to control cost.

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After months of wrangling Congress finally approved a \$307 Bil-

lion dollar so-called farm bill. That's about \$1,000 for each U.S. Citizen. It was vetoed by the President for a number of valid reasons including cost but was overridden by Congress.

In many ways, the only resemblance to a farm bill is the amount of pork it contains. Everything from the distribution of food stamps to disaster assistance programs. Every Congressman had pet projects designed to benefit special interests' The result being the rich get richer and the poor get poorer and the price of groceries goes up.

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If the price of a gallon ever gets back to \$3.50 again we will probably think its cheap, Our representative in Congress, Dr. Kagen has sponsored legislation to sue Saudi Arabia, Iran, Venezuela and other OPEC nations to comply with the same antitrust laws that U.S. companies must follow.

With demand for oil increasing no doubt these producers can sell all the oil they want to other countries. Some problems can't necessarily be resolved by teams of lawyers.

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The good news is the U.S. Census Bureau reported that Wisconsin is no longer one of the top 10 highest states in the nation. An honor we have held since 1980. We have now dropped to eleventh place.

The bad news is that while our ranking has dropped, the percentage of state and local taxes we pay each year has increased from 12.1 to 12.3% while the national average is 11.6 %, Also, we now have one of largest state debts per capita (which we didn't have in 1980) in the country and still have to figure out a way to pay it or eliminate it.

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The Journal-Sentinel reported on a survey sponsored by the Bradley Foundation which asked 100 questions about business conditions to 707 establishments in Milwaukee, Green Bay, Denver and Raleigh, NC. One purpose was to check the regulatory climate.

One result was that 18.5% of Milwaukee businesses said they had considered moving due to the business climate in Wisconsin. This compared to 14% in Green Bay but only 8.5% in Denver and 10% in North Carolina.

One recommendation from the survey was formation of a business advisory panel to work with and advise government officials. Will they listen?

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The Wisconsin Policy Institute prepared a survey in an effort to determine why hospital costs were high in Milwaukee. The main conclusion seemed to be the lack of competition.

Hospital prices are plenty high in Green Bay also, and we have four hospitals competing for business. Rep. Lasee's article on page #2 of this Tax Times offers one reason hospital charges are high. Patients subsidized by govt. plans mean that other patients pay more.

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An article in the Wall Street Journal reports that many states use elaborate schemes to overcharge the Federal Govt. for Medicaid reimbursement for services provided low income residents.

Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania were singled out as big offenders.. Wasn't this what the proposed hospital tax was all about, getting more federal money to offset other fees?

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Whatever the circumstances or if any person or group is at fault on the disputed Younker's deal will be nothing compared to explaining to taxpayers that the city owes \$5.4 Million (plus interest and legal fees). This will either require cuts in other services or a big increase in taxes.

Any situation where tons of taxpayer money is used for legal fees to settle a dispute is a waste of taxpayer money and a sign of poor fiscal management.

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General Motors has announced it will lay off over 756 workers from its Janesville plant. Obviously this will have a negative effect on the areas economy.

Gov. Doyle has responded by offering special job training and assistance for these workers. Will other employers in the state reducing their workforce will get the same benefits? Retraining GM workers probably won't be a problem but finding \$35/hr jobs in Wisconsin which include auto worker benefits may be more difficult.

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An item in the Small Business Times suggests that if the 124 nonprofit hospitals in the state paid property taxes it could amount to \$117 for the communities

in which they are located.. This would probably increase hospital expenses.

Truth is, there are a lot of so-called exempt organizations that could be paying property taxes. Union halls, agricultural associations, professional sports arenas and property, property owned by religious organizations, low income rental units are examples. Some of them make tidy profits. Many of them could at least pay a fee to cover services such as police, fire protection, snow removal and trash pickup they receive, and which in effect is paid by you and me as taxpayers

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On April 1, Wisconsin Voters overwhelmingly approved a referendum to limit the Governor's veto power to alter the state budget other than remove certain spending provisions. He can still veto the entire budget.

In an effort to cut the state budget to size, the Legislature presented a budget "fix" bill designed to cut some of the Governors spending proposals. He then vetoed the bill which was upheld on party lines. Back to the drawing board.

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One of the criteria of the committee in the selection of Carolyn Martin as chancellor of UW-Madison was her record of managing the finances at Cornell University.

One of her first public announcements however was that she would push for increased instructional staff salaries. While this may be a poor analogy, sometimes we get the impression (*compliments of the UW publicity dept.*) that the economy of the entire state of Wisconsin should be dedicated to supporting their illustrious institution over all other priorities.

The UW system is a great asset to the state and we are all proud of its many accomplishments. As in the private sector, we realize the success of any entity depends on the quality and dedication of its leaders and workers, and this usually means spending money.

While we can agree that instructors should be paid competitively, is Wisconsin setting the pace for the rest of the nation? Do all professors carry the same workload and value? Are some universities better able to spend money without depending on massive taxpayer support?

Somehow it seems the UW system is able to operate below the radar without the scrutiny and approval of taxpayers such as with local school districts and government units or even the state legislature

* * * * *

It does not appear that the energy crisis will end or that the price of fuel will go down anytime soon. Ethanol and other alternatives have yet to be perfected. What is needed is a full-scale scientific effort until a practical solution. Agree?

* * * * *

Finally, we have heard that the Green Bay Education Association and Green Bay Board of Education have begun negotiations on a new labor contract covering our public school teachers.

While details will likely be kept confidential we have heard that salary and benefit demands may be substantial. We will have to trust the Board to negotiate in the interests of taxpayers as well as maintain the quality of education.

They should be well aware that with depressed property values and rising costs in just about everything else increasing property taxes may be very unpopular.

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

"Things That Make Us Wonder" consists of taxpayer related thoughts that occur to us 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 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 to BCTA@Execpc.com,

"You can't be for big government, big taxes, and big bureaucracy and still be for the little guy."
... **Ronald Reagan**

The TAX TIMES

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Green Bay, WI 54305-0684

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The TAX TIMES - June/July, 2008

BCTA Meeting and Events Schedule – MARK YOUR CALENDARS.

Thursday - June 15, 2008, Monthly BCTA Meeting, 12:00 Noon.
Titledown Brewing Co., "Frost" Room
Program: Speaker, Current events.

Thursday - July 17, 2008, Monthly BCTA Meeting, 12:00 Noon.
Titledown Brewing Co., "Frost" Room
Program: Speaker, Current events.

Thursday - August 21, 2008, Monthly BCTA Meeting, 12:00 Noon.
Titledown Brewing Co., "Frost" Room

NOTE: There will not be a TAX TIMES for July. There will be a July meeting.

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 welcome to attend and participate in our open discussions.

COST" \$8.00, Payable at meeting. Includes lunch, tax & tip.
Call Jim Frink – 336-6410 for information or to leave message.

All candidates for public office, and all public officials are
Cordially invited to attend our open meeting and be recognized.



**June -
July
2008**

"Has there ever been a politician who admitted he was running for office because he needed the job."
. . . Doug Larsen

"Things In our country run in spite of government, not by aid of it."
. . . Will Rogers

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.