

Presidential Hopefuls and The Badger.

While the Democrats clamor to compare John McCain with the preposterously unpopular Pres. George W. Bush, they and we are ignoring the similarities between Mr. Bush and their man, Barack Obama.

Bush and Obama were both reluctant entrants into the presidential race. Bush was happily governing Texas and pondering a future in Bud Selig's shoes. NY Times wag Maureen Dowd described him as "Achilles sulking in his tent." It took some strong polling, big money and power arm twisting to get him into the race – which he ultimately entered more out of duty to his party and his country than to any presidential aspirations.

Obama was similarly reluctant, having only been a US Senator a light 2 years before he had to make a tough choice. The confluence of his bestseller, "The Audacity of Hope," with the on-ramp to the 2008 presidential election forced some quick thinking. The polling and financing was so good, it coaxed him easily into the race. With Hillary in ascendance, Obama simply rolled the die; no pressure, after all he was just researching his next book. He didn't really start as a serious candidate.

Bush broke every fundraising record there was. Obama has done the same. They both chased competitors out of the race with their rippling warchests and media mastery. Bush and Obama both faced gravitas problems. Sept. 11, 2001 quickly erased from our memory any questions we had about Bush's gravitas. He was quick to kick butt and take names. Whatever you think of Bush's subsequent actions in the war on terror, it certainly started off on the right foot.

Bush also helped allay gravitas concerns by picking Dick Cheney as his VP. Cheney, who was Secretary of Defense for his father, Bush 41, came with executive experience and strong knowledge of government bureaucracy. Obama still suffers from gravitas issues. His choice of VP, Joe Biden, will not help him in this matter. Biden may be grizzled and have some foreign policy chops his partner lacks, but Biden has no executive or bureaucratic experience – the same as Obama. Biden will not be Obama's Cheney.

Finally, Bush and Obama want tax cuts for the rich. The Bush tax cuts for the investor class, however derided by the left, stimulated the economy and created jobs and income for the middle class. Sadly, he simply laid down when the spenders knocked on the door.

Obama wants to cut taxes for everyone making less than \$250,000 a year. He calls this a 'middle-class' tax cut. Do you feel anyone making more than \$100,000 a year is rich? Obama's Robin Hood scheme proposes to cut taxes for the rich, while hiking taxes for the super-rich to redistribute to the poor. This Democrat play won't create jobs and will stimulate the economy as much as those stimulus checks we all used to pay down our credit cards.

In the end, Obama and McCain are really nothing like Bush, despite some similarities. I urge you to ignore the political comparisons and pick the candidate with tax policies that will create chances to earn, not opportunities to spend. This economy doesn't need more free money, which is what we will get with a President Obama, and at whose expense?

Now, enter stage right, Governor Palin squashing the Obama buzz. Oh that Wisconsin had such a choice, a real tax slashing, in their face, fat cat hunter. I only hope she can hunt the sorely named Wisconsin State mascot, The Badger (*Taxidea taxus*) and tax us, and tax us....

Enjoy the convention pageantry!

Richard Parins, President

The BROWN COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION
Promoting Fiscal Responsibility in Government

The Saga of Sheriff Joe.

There have been many stories on the internet about Sheriff Joe Arpalo of Maricopa County, Arizona (Phoenix) and his unique approach to law enforcement and treatment of offenders.

The question always arises is if these methods are accepted in Phoenix, would they work in Wisconsin? The bottom lines being #1 punishment for crimes that have been committed, #2 discouraging offenders from committing repeat crimes and #3 The ultimate cost to taxpayers.

His approach to problems has given him folklore status similar to the old wild west heroes.

Rather than build new air conditioned facilities for prisoners, he established a "tent city jail" out in the desert. Prisoners are charged for their meals. He owned his own farm, and has prisoners grow and harvest their own food, saving the county money.

He took away luxuries such as exercise equipment, "G" movies, and coffee because it had no nutritional value. He removed cable TV but when a Federal court ordered it returned only allowed the Weather and Disney Channels to be viewed. He initiated chain gangs to work on public projects, including female chain gangs to prevent complaints of discrimination.

Prisoners were given pink boxer shorts and pink sock to wear for identification purposes. When prisoners complained about the heat, he reminded them of our soldiers fighting in the deserts of Iraq. He reminded them they were not staying at the Ritz Carlton.

Recently it was disclosed the county was spending \$18 Million per year on stray animals, like cats and dogs. Sheriff Joe offered to take over the operation, and the county supervisors agreed. Now the animal shelters are staffed and operated by prisoners, who feed and care for the strays. Animals are walked and exercised daily, and prisoners are trained in their care. Animals are placed for adoption, and even entered in shows where they have won prizes. The cost to the county is now \$3 Million per year.

While some of Sheriff Joe's methods have proven effective, would such an approach work in Wisconsin? Using prisoners for public works projects was once common in Wisconsin, but has gradually been phased out for a number of reasons, including competition from private industry and security expense. While many of us may agree that most punishments for crimes as sentenced are justified, the mindset of the average Wisconsin citizen would object to some of Sheriff Joe's tactics.

Law enforcement and prison operations in Wisconsin have become a major industry, employing thousands of workers and costing taxpayers millions of dollars annually. Recent laws imposing longer sentences, the increase in drug related crimes, plus the influx of illegal aliens committing crimes has made the situation worse. It would be interesting to find if Sheriff Joe's methods are effective in preventing repeat crimes or if Wisconsin's policy of longer sentences is a better approach.

Despite criticism, Sheriff Joe has been re-elected every four years by a large majority. One problem, lawsuits by the ACLU and Amnesty International on behalf of inmates. have cost Maricopa County \$48 Million. Lawyers in Wisconsin would have a field day.

Jim Frink - BCTA

Arrest the Illegals.

Recently there was an article highlighted on Fox Politics from the Wausau Daily Herald. (FoxPolitics.Net a great source of early morning news around the state. I recommend you sign up to receive your daily email.)

The article described how the Mexican community in Wausau held a meeting because they are upset due to difficulties getting services, education, Social Security cards and driver's licenses. The article went on to say that many speakers at this town hall meeting admitted they are here illegally. Gee, it's good they are still having problems. Because the liberals and certain business interests want to make it easy for them.

What disturbed me most, beside the fact that they felt comfortable having a public meeting, is that Wausau Police Chief Jeff Hardel and Marathon County Sheriff Randy Hoenisch were in attendance and they didn't make a single arrest.

Now, what I would expect law enforcement to do when discovering criminals is to arrest them, then deport them. Instead, Sheriff Hoenisch and Police Chief Hardel said their officers aren't targeting them. They assured the audience that they want them to feel comfortable with law enforcement. They don't care that they are here illegally.

This disturbs me. We have law enforcement welcoming lawbreakers with open arms.

What is the value of United States citizenship? If anyone who gets here, somehow, has the same rights (not the responsibilities) that citizens enjoy? Citizenship should be something to be valued. (Apparently citizenship is being devalued, just like our money.) Unfortunately, liberals and the Catholic Church are calling us to be soft on the illegals and recognize all that they have been through. They say we should greet these illegals with open arms when they get here. It shouldn't matter how they get here, by hook or crook, by swimming, digging or climbing. Once here, we should ignore the fact that they are illegal non-citizens.

In other countries, for instance Mexico, non-citizens can't fully own property. Citizenship means something. How far would we (non-Mexican citizens) get, if we demanded English be used on official Mexican forms or insisted an English translator be provided for all court proceedings? I wonder if they have any Spanish as a second language classes. This is at a time when the Mexican government is deporting Central Americans who are jumping their borders. And we aren't?

We should treat the Mexican illegals exactly the same way Mexico treats their illegals and even legal non-citizens. What they need to do is fix the problems in their own country, not escape to ours (only if they use legal channels).

We need change, all right. But not the type of change talked about by either national party and their candidates. It is time that citizens of the United States demand that illegals be returned to their home countries. Do you agree?

Rep. Frank G. Lasee

"If you see a man approaching you with the obvious intent of doing you good, you should run for your life."

. . . Henry David Thoreau

Protecting Our Borders.

The Federal Government in Action.

A little item in the last issue of "TIME" Magazine caught my attention.

It referred to raids made by the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement Dept. (ICE), which netted about 600 illegal immigrants at a factory in Mississippi, and another 400 at a meat packing plant in Iowa. They claim ICE had arrested 5,000 workers during 2007.

While this article may indicate that our government is concerned about illegal aliens, and that it is a problem we should all be concerned with, it did not say if those arrested were incarcerated, deported, or simply sent home. Just as important is what if anything happened to the employer of these people.

At present, no one really seems to have any idea of how many illegal immigrants we have living in this country. Estimates are at least 10-15 million.

We keep finding on a daily basis that many of our resources, paid for by taxpayers are limited. These include education, health care, public safety, housing and benefits for the poor, infrastructure, and all other citizenship benefits of our society.

There is no other country is the world which allows a non-citizen to obtain a drivers license or any other benefit without first presenting proper identification and documentation.

Our crime rate is troubling, our prisons are full, our poverty rate is high and rising, health care is expensive, our schools need more money, and we can't seem to make English our official language. How many, or if that matter if any of these problems are caused or aggravated by illegal immigrants we really don't know. It is like a giant game of hide and seek.

Getting back to the ICE raids on industrial plants hiring illegal immigrants. The way it is supposed to be and always was is an employer is compelled to file a tax return each year covering their profit, loss, and financial position.

If, and it would be hard to imagine otherwise they hire employees and claim their wages as a business expense they must file a report with the Social Security Agency giving their employees FICA number, the

amount of wages they earned during the year, and the amount of Social Security taxes which were withheld. All of the numbers must match whether you have 3 employees or 300,000.

Now days you are issued a Social Security number when you are born, and we would assume that in this computer age our government is capable of keeping track of it for you. THIS IS IMPORTANT AS WHEN YOU RETIRE THE RECORD OF YOUR LIFETIME EARNINGS IS USED TO DETERMINE YOUR RETIREMENT BENEFITS. You may be in for a surprise if you find someone else has been using your identification.

In other words, either illegal immigrants are being issued Social Security numbers by our government when they aren't even U.S. citizens, or are taking advantage of someone else's name as their own.

When an employer reports their wages paid for the year, apparently it is too much trouble to see if the name on the records matches also. For some time it has been a requirement for business owners to verify a new employees Social Security card by personal examination and also a birth certificate or drivers license. Strict penalties are established for violators.

Employers needing part time help for food harvesting and processing still have provisions available for foreign help. Just follow the rules, enforce the law and take care of our own citizens. JF

National Debt Update.

On Sept. 1, 2008, the official United States National Debt stood at **\$9,658,188,280,178 and 83 cents**. That's \$9.6 Trillion if you like to round things off (*A trillion is a thousand billion if you are like Congress and can't tell the difference.*) This is an increase of over \$67 Billion over last month at this time. The U.S. Treasury reports the debt is increasing at a rate of \$1.92 Billion per day, so you can see they outdid themselves a couple of billion last month.

Last months increase also amounts to about \$220 for each US citizen. You can add that to your credit card debt. Perhaps you should also cash your economic stimulus check right away while it is still good. Don't worry. The debt is secured in bonds (largely held by foreign governments.) We call it the official debt because the government requires borrowed funds to be considered as part of the debt. They aren't obligated to count items like the Social Security and Medicare deficits, government retirements plans payable and a few trillion more of other items.

What is really troubling is that our political candidates choose to completely ignore the problem. Instead they promise us more government in the form of healthcare and lower taxes. Haven't they done enough to us already?

Jim Frink - BCTA

AMERICANS FOR PROSPERITY

INVITES YOU TO A FALL 2008

TOWN HALL MEETING

Thursday, October 2, 2008

7:30 - 8:45 a. m.

Comfort Suites, 1951 Bond St.

Green Bay, WI

Free admission, Free Lunch, No obligation whatsoever.

Subject - The economic effects of the measures recommended by The Governors Task Force on Global Warming.

State Rep. Jim Ott, a former meteorologist and a forum of area Candidates for office will discuss their take on the Governor's Task Force.

Americans For Prosperity is a non-profit organization advocating free market solutions to today's political problems.

Is Enough Ever Enough?

Someone in Brown County suggested that when the Packer tax (1/2 cent sales tax) ends in a few years, we should give this money to our public schools because they just don't have enough money. (I bet the Wisconsin way report will suggest a sales tax to lower property taxes and give even more to schools.)

Another person's response: even if he sent in his entire paycheck all the time, schools still wouldn't have enough money (at least according to the education community).

We've had spending controls on schools for over a decade. Even with them in place, we are spending nearly \$11,500 per child. Can you imagine how much we would be spending with the decisions completely in the education community's hands? How much do you think we would be spending per student without revenue controls that allow increases each year per student? K-12 taxes make up roughly half our property tax bills, and nearly all of our income taxes go to state aids. Our schools are the single largest spending item for both the state and our local taxes.

For years, my office has been tabulating data from our schools. This is self-reported data on the money and where it comes from, the number of students, number of teachers, and the total number of staff. It is in easy-to-see spread sheets. One for each of the 426 school districts in our state.

These spreadsheets show growth in money spent, spending per student and spending per teacher and per staff member. People are amazed at how much we are spending today. And at how fast it continues to grow, even as the student numbers decline.

The data is available at my School Funding page. Just click on your county, then pick your district. State wide and county averages are also available on the website.

If schools are in trouble in Wisconsin, it's not because of the money.

Statewide school funding has increased from \$7.5 billion in 2000, to nearly \$10 billion in 2006 – increases of nearly 5% per year.

This is despite the fact that we've got fewer students. Between 2000 and 2006, the statewide number of K-12 students in Wisconsin fell by over 3,200. That didn't stop us from hiring more teachers: over the same period, the number of teachers in Wisconsin public schools grew by 740.

Am I the only one who finds that odd?

More money and fewer students means our per-student spending is up: statewide, per-student spending in Wisconsin went over \$10,000 for the first time in 2003, up from under \$8,500 in 1999.

Other states that are getting similar results educating their children are often spending less than we are.

Educating our kids is important. It isn't only about money and ever more staff. It is about methods, style, results, and accountability. We need more of these and our kids will benefit. They will be smarter, better and even more above average than they are now.

Rep. Frank G. Lasee

Fire Protection Still A Good Deal for Wisconsin Taxpayers.

Wisconsin municipalities spent \$525.0 million on fire protection services in 2006, a 20.2% increase from 2001 (\$436.8 million). However, fire protection spending as a percentage of all municipal expenditures has remained the same, 16% in 2001 and 2006, according to a new report from the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance (WISTAX), a nonprofit, nonpartisan public-policy research organization dedicated to citizen education.

According to WISTAX, per capita expenditures on fire protection increased from \$80.88 in 2001 to \$93.45 in 2006, a 15.5% rise. Other fire-related spending also increased. Debt service payments on fire-related items grew 36.5% between 2001 and 2006. Capital fire-related expenditures for building construction and equipment purchases increased at a relatively modest 7.9% over the period studied.

To pay for growing fire protection costs, municipalities used funds primarily from municipal property taxes and state shared revenues. In 2006, an estimated 90.5% of fire expenditures were funded through these two sources. Combined, property taxes and shared revenues grew 14.9% from 2001 to 2006, a slower rate than fire-specific revenues.

The three primary fire-specific revenues grew 57.4% between 2001 and 2006. Intergovernmental fee revenue, paid to municipalities that provide fire protection to other areas, rose 19.4%. State distributions from a tax on fire insurance premiums increased 61.2%. The most rapid growth was found in public charges, increasing 171.5%. Some areas may prefer to increase revenue from public charges for items such as fire calls and inspections, rather than increase property taxes or pull funds from other municipal services.

Revenues from all sources were used to fund Wisconsin's 16,081 full- and part-time firefighters. Wisconsin had 2.89 firefighters per 1,000 residents in 2006, fourth highest in the nation. The U.S. average was 1.42 per 1,000. Neighbors Illinois (2.21), Minnesota (1.93), Michigan (1.77), and Iowa (1.57) were also above average, though lower than Wisconsin.

Wisconsin's high ranking was due to its number of part-time firefighters. Here, there were over three part-time firefighters for every full-time one. The U.S. average was 0.5 to one. Nearby Minnesota (5 to 1 ratio), Michigan (2 to 1), and Iowa (nearly 2 to 1) also relied heavily on part-time firefighters. Small municipalities with limited budgets in Wisconsin and nearby states rely more on part-time and volunteer firefighters than other states do.

Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance (WISTAX)

"Nothing is more essential to the establishment of manners in a state than that all persons employed in places of power and trust must be people of unexceptionable character."

. . . Samuel Adams

VISIT OUR WEBSITE

www.BCTaxpayers.Org

EMail, BCTA@ExecPc.Com

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.

"During times of universal deceit, telling the truth becomes a revolutionary act." . . . George Orwell

"Nothing doth more hurt in a state than that cunning men pass for wise." . . . Sir Francis Bacon

"The Founding Fathers believed that faith in God was the key to our being a good people and America's becoming a great nation." . . . Ronald Reagan

Help Wanted.

BCTA member or members who would be interested in assisting with and possibly assuming responsibility for publishing the monthly *TAX TIMES*.

This has proven to be a valuable and effective communication tool for the association, as it serves as our newsletter informing of meeting dates and other activities, but letting our local and state representatives, the media and other taxpayer groups know we are concerned with how are tax dollars are being spent.

Requirements are a personal computer with internet access. Microsoft Publisher or equivalent, some writing skills, and ability to format material to be interesting and readable. You will also need a few hours of time each month and be able to work with a printing deadline.

The present editor will work with you as much as necessary. You will have freedom to present material to your own liking as long as it fits the needs of the organization.

If interested, call Jim Frink at 336-6410, or E-Mail Frink@Execpc.com.

Things That Make Us Wonder.

As if air travel isn't already expensive and complicated enough, the Homeland Security Administration has proposed regulations requiring visitors to the United States to register online 3 full days before they depart. Presently a passenger manifest is provided to U.S. officials 30 minutes prior to departure from international airports.

With floods of illegal immigrants literally walking across our borders, setting up residency and taking advantage of our citizenship benefits it would seem they may be taking the wrong approach.

Several municipalities and counties in the state are considering 4 day workdays for their employees. They claim it will give relief from the high price of gas to drive to work.

Ten hour shifts have been practical in private industry where factories and retail operations are open longer and schedules are easily adaptable. Often they result in fewer employees doing the same amount of work. However is the public sector as adaptable? While public safety is a 24/7 concern, offices are usually a strict 8 hour a day affair.

The bottom line will be to offer the same level of service without adding more taxpayer expense to the budget.

Both McCain and Obama seem to acknowledge that income taxes are a problem and promise tax relief. The question is how. Their philosophies and solutions differ greatly.

The Treasury Dept. claims that for 2006, the top 5% of wage-earners paid 60.14% of income taxes while the bottom 50% only paid 2.99%. Not much room for cuts there. Those in the upper brackets also pay at a much high rate.

The Village of Allouez in proposing a rate increase of about \$1.00 per 1,000 gallons of water starting next year. It was suggested residents use less water to offset the increase. Good idea but it is difficult to determine how much water you now actually use because you are

charged by the cubic foot rather than gallons used.

Austin-Straubel Airport is a credit to Green Bay and Brown County and we are sure compares favorably with cities of our size. It still represents a taxpayer expense to all of us, with constant improvement and maintenance projects. Recently it was announced that the state and county will spend over \$3 Million for improvements to access roads and employee parking.

In the meantime three airlines, Continental, Delta, and Allegiant would be discontinuing services due mainly to economic reasons. While this probably constitutes but a small part of the airports traffic it is also a national trend, are these projects that important at this time?

The DNR has recently completed renovations including a visitor center at their Wild Rose Fish Hatchery. The total cost was \$16 million with more projects in the works.

While this seems to be a lot of money to spend on a fish hatchery, the DNR justifies it by the money they claim is added to the economy by sports fishermen. The fish should be happy.

There have been reports of dramatic increases in the price of certain prescription medicines. Some doubling in the last four years.

While this may very well be true to a number of reasons, could another factor be that the Federal Government is subsidizing the industry more due to the introduction of Medicare Part D?

Probably because it is an election year the Federal Govt. has been anxious to hand out money to people, even if the treasury doesn't necessarily have the money to give.

Examples are the "Economic Stimulus Package", fire, flood and hurricane relief, and federal aid for home mortgage holders and failing banks. There was talk of relief of some kind due to the high price of gasoline. What next, bailing out people with excessive self-inflected credit card debt?

Nearly 100 College Presidents

from around the country have signed a petition to lower the national drinking age. While this may have appeal to college students and the brewing industry, there will probably be more arguments against the proposal than for it.

Remember a few years ago the biggest reason for Wisconsin adopting the .08% limit to determine if a driver was intoxicated was the loss of federal highway funding.

What next? How about a petition to raise the speed limit to 75 because everyone drives at that speed.

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The Wisconsin State Journal reports the UW Board of Regents budget will include \$37.5 Million in taxpayer money and \$13.4 Million extra in student fees to "support an agenda to recruit and retain more students." In other words, advertising to make the system larger. The new budget will also request \$140 million in bonding for "high-priority" construction projects.

The UW system is an asset to the state and we can agree that education is the key to the future. A college education should be available to all who seek it. However, somehow there seems to be a mindset that the UW system is the only show in town and that their priorities take precedence over other taxpayer concerns.

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In a related item, the outgoing UW chancellor released a 3,000 word "essay" strongly criticizing the Wisconsin Manufacturers Association, and accusing them of creating a "toxic" political environment. While this appears to be an example of Wisconsin partisan politics in action it is discouraging.

Governor Doyle himself has said on many occasions the key to Wisconsin's future lies in attracting and expanding private industry. Good paying jobs are what keeps the economy going.

Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce represents the leading manufacturing companies and private employers of the state. They have their concerns for their well being and the future the same as WEAC or the UW system has theirs. One side can't get along without the other. Business needs every bit of cooperation it can get from government and government needs a strong economy to carry out its obliga-

tions. Especially in Wisconsin.

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With our global economy, even the most unusual circumstances can cause shortages everywhere. An example is a recent article from the *Milwaukee Business Journal* warning of a shortage of vinyl medical exam gloves as a result of the Peking Olympics. It seems that is where most of the worlds supply is made, and the factories that make them were shut down prior to the Olympics due to air pollution concerns. Raw material shortages and the value of the dollar were also listed as concerns.

While we are sure that this will not shut down our health care system, it does show the danger of not having multiple sources of supply for critical items. Is it a good idea to depend on China or any nation as our principal source of any strategic commodity?

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A new 911 communication center has been a matter of discussion in Brown County for several years, with costs, jurisdiction or technology as roadblocks.

The county board is finally ready to move ahead but at an increased cost of \$1.4 million for a total cost of \$5.2 million. Did they add a swimming pool?

We are sure the need for this center can be justified and will be beneficial to residents. Perhaps we missed it in the paper, but we haven't seen much about how this center will work or why they need an 11,000 sq. foot building to house the facility.

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Using the term "Chiller Capacity", UW Madison says it will need \$67.4 Million for new air conditioning units by 2011. Wonder what the electric bill will be to keep these things running? Other campuses also will need costly upgrading to their systems.

They claim these projects will help pay for themselves because they can rent dormitory space during the summer for special events. Yeah.

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The Wausaukee School District had decided to disband after voters rejected two referendums seeking a property tax increase for operating expenses. They finally approved a third

referendum when it was disclosed it would cost more to send students to neighboring schools. They now have to reverse their decision to disband the district and reorganize.

One question is what would happen if more school districts choose to disband when taxpayers feel they can no longer afford to fund them?

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A survey of students at Beloit College proved one thing: that most of the participants didn't know much about what life was like prior to 1990, the year most of them were born. Maybe that is just as good.

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Milwaukee has spent \$102 million in recent years on remodeling and new schools in an effort to have more neighborhood schools and reduce bussing. The Journal-Sentinel reported that in 16 of the 22 schools effected however, test scores dropped dramatically. The conclusion was that strong educational reforms bring better results than fancy facilities.

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Millions of dollars have been spent even in Wisconsin in efforts to automate and simplify voter registration records and keep elections honest. It appears we may be getting no place.

The state Government Accountability Board reports that 22%, or 1 in 5 voters drivers licenses do not match the addresses on poll lists. This type of situation would cause delays and confusion at voting places which is unfortunate as people should be encouraged rather than discouraged to exercise their right to vote.

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Now that the price of gasoline has fallen back to the \$3.60 range, it really seems like a bargain. We forget it is still about \$1.00 a dollar a gallon higher than it was a year ago.

What it will be a year from now is anybody's guess. What really counts is what will it cost our children 20-100 years down the line. Most of us seem to agree that we should drill for and develop our own resources. In the meantime practical alternatives will have to be developed.

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What is the largest employer in Milwaukee County? If you guessed

the breweries or one of the famous heavy duty machinery manufacturers, guess again.

According to a *Gaming News*, article which listed the 10 largest Indian casinos in the country, the Milwaukee Potawatomi Bingo Casino, with 780,000 sq. feet is the nation's largest. The Milwaukee Casino attracts over 4 million visitors annually to 3,100 slot machines, roulette and other gambling pleasures.

The article also claims the casino is Milwaukee Counties largest employer but did not give numbers.

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The Green Bay Board of Education has announced price increases for its school lunch program. Reasons given were the increased price of food items, etc. That we understand.

It was not disclosed however, who pays for those students whose families are considered in the poverty level and receive either free or subsidized lunches. Is this cost passed on to those who pay or to taxpayers through some other program?

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The 30 year old "Hoan" bridge in Milwaukee is in need of repairs and the Dept. of Transportation is proposing to tear it down and rebuild it at a cost of \$41 Million. This bridge is similar in design to our Leo Frigo bridge which was built shortly after the Hoan bridge.

We realize Wisconsin winters and changing needs are always a factor in highway planning. However, sometimes it appears that the DOT give more precedence to the aesthetic appearance of a highway project than to safety, how long it will last or the ultimate cost to taxpayers.

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There was a time when railroads were the main mode of transportation between cities, until being replaced by automobiles and airplanes.

Amtrak has brought some limited passenger traffic back between a few cities, and there are calls to expand service further, even including the Fox Valley and Green Bay. While this would be nice, has anyone really put a pencil to the cost?

Much of the old right-of-ways have been abandoned or encroached by other development, the tracks have depreciated to the point where high speed passenger trains would not be safe, and thousands of highway crossings would have to

be upgraded.

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From everything we have read former Green Bay school supt. Dan Nerad has been well accepted in Madison and we agree their gain was our loss.

Like just about school districts in the state Madison has budget problems and their school district has approved a Nov. 4, referendum allowing a property tax increase for operating expenses.

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The Environmental Protection Agency claims that a number of Wisconsin counties, including Brown, do not meet their air quality standards.

They cite "thousands of scientific studies" and conclude that allowable daily limits of soot levels must fall by 46%. They further estimate health benefits of between \$9 and \$75 Billion a year, but didn't disclose what obtaining their standards would cost or who would end up paying for it.

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School Districts in Ohio have experimented with a "value-added" concept to determine the effective of their systems. The concept is designed to track whether a years worth of learning is actually happening in the course of a school year.— regardless of whether a child passes a test at the end of the year.

Sounds interesting if they can figure a way to factor in each child's learning ability and what they expect them to learn in the first place.

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The Green Bay City Council has legitimized the scalping of Packer tickets by allowing those with an \$800 license to operate in a special area. One question is how are so many tickets available to scalpers when 50,000 + are on the Packers waiting list.

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The Wisconsin Realtors Assn. reports that home sales in the state for the second qtr of 2008 were down 20.79% behind the 2d qtr of last year. The national average was 16.3% less. Nonetheless the state claims the value of all real estate in the state up 3.3% for the past year.

Be prepared for your 2008 property tax statement. The bottom line is

your assessed value should be the amount you could sell your property for at the time. If this amount is actually lower than the assessed value you may want to see about an adjustment.

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The Presidential Election is now less than two months away and the barrage of commercials is heating up. We must remember these are prepared by well paid advertising agencies and are designed to influence potential voters more than to dispense the truth. The races for the Wisconsin Legislature and Senate haven't really started yet and there is little doubt new records for spending will be set this year.

It would be comforting however to hear more positive messages and not keep having to listen about how bad everything is going in the country and how bad off we all are. No wonder we have such a bad reputation in the world when we can't even say anything good about ourselves.

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."

"Who ever said it is the responsibility of government to make life easy?" . . . **James Geraghty**

"I don't pass the buck, nor do I alibi out of any decision I made." . . . **Harry S. Truman**

The TAX TIMES

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

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The TAX TIMES - September, 2008

BCTA Meeting and Events Schedule – MARK YOUR CALENDARS.

Thursday - September 18, 2008. Monthly BCTA Meeting, 12:00 Noon
Titletown Brewing Co., “Frost” Room.
Speaker, Green Bay Mayor Jim Schmitt.

Note: We apologize for inconvenience caused in parking at the last meeting. We were not aware of the problem in advance. As we do not know what the situation will be, we suggest you take Broadway to Kellogg St. and enter from the back of Titletown Brewing.

Thursday - October 2, 2008. 1951 Bond St. Americans for Prosperity.
7:30 A.M. Forum on the Governors Task Force on Global
Warming. Free Breakfast. See Notice on Page 3.

Thursday - October 16, 2008, 2008. Monthly BCTA Meeting, 12:00 Noon
Titletown Brewing Co., “Frost” Room.
Speaker, State Representative Phil Montgomery

Thursday - November 4, 2008. Presidential Election Day.
WHATEVER YOUR CHOICE, BE SURE TO VOTE!

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

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

Meetings are open to the public.

COST” \$7.00, Payable at meeting. Includes lunch, tax & tip.
Call Jim Frink – 336-6410 for information or to leave message.

Candidates for Public Office are cordially invited to attend our meetings and be recognized.



September
2008

“Well, the conference met today and appointed a commission to meet tomorrow and appoint a delegation which will eventually appoint a subcommittee to draw up ways and means of finding out what to start with first.” . . . Will Rogers

“There are no personal sympathies in politics.” . . . Margaret Thatcher

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.