

Eliminate the QEO? Now is not the time.

With the Democrats now holding majorities in both the Senate and Assembly, along with a Democrat Governor, discussion has begun about elimination of the Qualified Economic Offer (QEO). Briefly, the QEO is one of three key components placed in state law in the 1990's related to school funding. The first component was that the state would pay two-thirds of school costs. The second was that, since the state was now paying the major share of costs, school district spending would be allowed to grow only on the basis of enrollment and inflation (exceptions permitted via referendum). The third component – QEO – established that a school district which offered a minimum 3.8% increase in wages and benefits would not be subject to binding arbitration. In the years prior to QEO, teachers unions used binding arbitration to escalate teacher compensation at a rate well over inflation – and property taxes soared as a result.

The QEO concept has worked quite well for 15 years now. Wisconsin has maintained its enviable position in public education, continuously leading the nation in ACT scores. Teacher compensation has increased at a reasonable rate, with school districts frequently settling at increases above the 3.8% required to avoid arbitration. Consequently, teachers remain in ample supply as they are not leaving the profession and colleges are producing satisfactory numbers of new teachers. Finally, school property taxes are not in the runaway mode experienced in the years before the spending limits and QEO.

Except for the most rabid of teacher pay activists, those who understand the school funding system acknowledge that the QEO could not be eliminated without also eliminating the school district spending constraints, a sure disaster for property taxpayers. The current system may not be perfect, but it contains the elements which are getting everyone's needs reasonably met. Are there difficulties and tensions? Certainly. And there should be, when you have competing interests each with their own objectives vying for appropriately limited resources. And remember, any community who wants to spend unlimited dollars on schools can do so – just pass a referendum and pay the higher taxes.

Notwithstanding all the above, we need to look at the present conditions. The economy is reeling and while it's helpful to be optimistic about recovery, there could be some very grim times ahead. Governments at all levels are dealing with deep fiscal problems, much of which was brought on by recklessness at the state and federal levels. To even suggest that we should tamper with something as complex and politically polarizing as school funding and QEO during these conditions is a public disservice. There is more important, urgent work to do.

Tom Sladek - Director

BROWN COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION

2009 Taxpayer Survey Enclosed.

Please take the time to give us your thoughts on current issues. Results will be in the March **TAX TIMES**.

The BROWN COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION
Promoting Fiscal Responsibility in Government

Just say NO to the stimulus plan.

Americans for Prosperity is conducting a grassroots campaign to stop the American Recovery and Reinvestment Bill of 2009, urging Americans to contact their U.S. Senators and Representatives in opposition to the trillion dollar government "stimulus plan."

Below are "*No Stimulus*" talking Points shared via <http://nostimulus.com>, a project of Americans for Prosperity. The site also provides an opportunity to sign an online petition opposing the "stimulus plan" as well as aids in contacting your elected officials.

1. Every dollar the government spends comes from the private sector.

Nobel Prize winner Milton Friedman famously said: "*there ain't no such thing as a free lunch.*" Government spending is either financed through higher taxes, higher federal borrowing, or by printing money. Those are the only possibilities. They all create greater economic damage than any stimulus effect of new spending

- **Tax increases lower the incentive to work, save, and invest.** There is a strong association between tax increases and reduced economic growth. In an economic crisis, tax hikes should be unthinkable. The Revenue Act of 1932 was one of the major reasons an economic crisis deepened into the Great Depression.
- **Government borrowing also takes money out of the private economy**—the money that bond purchasers hand over to the government in exchange for the bonds. That money could otherwise be used for business investment that would expand the economy's productive capacity. If the funds are borrowed from abroad, our exports are lowered because U.S. dollars are being used to buy bonds instead of goods. Borrowed funds also have to be paid back, placing a burden on future taxpayers. Excessive borrowing also may increase interest rates, deepening the credit crisis.
- **Inflation may be most damaging financing mechanism of all.** If government spends money that it hasn't taxed or borrowed, then it is literally creating money out of thin air. More dollars being created means that the dollars in our pockets and bank accounts are worth less than they were before. Inflation is a stealth tax that erodes the value of everything and destroys real economic growth.

2. History shows spending stimulus fails.

America experimented with large-scale expansions of government spending in the 1930s with the New Deal and again in the 1960s and 70s with the Great Society. These dramatic expansions of government spending coincided with economic failure. The long-boom that started under Reagan and continued until now with only a couple of brief, mild recessions coincided with a significant decline in federal spending as a percentage of the economy.

3. Infrastructure projects should be judged on their merits, but not as stimulus.

There is a role for government in providing certain public goods that the market cannot efficiently provide. If financing is available at favorable rates it may make sense to take a long-term view and begin projects that are legitimately justified on their merits. We should be under no misconception, however, that public works spending is stimulative, because borrowed dollars are taken out of the private sector.

Jo Egelhoff, *FoxPolitics.net*

Editors note: *Since the above article was prepared there have been a number of articles and news items concerning the huge amount of "pork projects" and partisan policy items being inserted into the "stimulus bill." Much of it having no connection whatsoever with providing employment, improving the economy, or benefiting the country as a whole. President Obama has promised transparency in Government and the American people should know exactly what Congress is doing with their money.*

National Debt Update.

On the last day of January, 2009 the U. S. National debt clock had reached a total of **\$10,849,965,693,196.50**. It's growing at a speed of \$39,125.92 per second so it's a little difficult to keep track of. That's \$10.8 Trillion, or "*an investment in our future*" as they say in Washington talk. Our grandchildren should be happy.

At that rate it adds \$3.38 Billion each day, which should probably reach \$11 Trillion on or about March 16, of this year. It was only last October that they added another digit to the clock because they just went over 10 Trillion.

What is most frightening is the way our elected representatives keep spending money as if this will solve all problems for all time. "Next" year they will balance the budget and then we can start paying off the debt. So they tell us.

Maybe they also believe we won't have any more energy problems, recessions, wars or natural disasters by the time it is paid. **JF**

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

2009 Taxpayers Survey.

For the past several years we have sent a survey of current taxpayer issues to our readers. We would like back by Feb. 25, to give us time to compile them and include the results in our March *TAX TIMES*. All of our readers are invited to participate.

Please, it will only take a few minutes to complete and return. The results important to us as an organization. Thank you

"Too bad all the people who know how to run the country are busy driving taxis or cutting hair." . . . **George Burns**
"If you think health care is expensive now, wait until you see what it costs when it is free." . . . **P. J. O'Rourke**
"The inherent vice of capitalism is the unequal sharing of the blessings, The inherent blessing of socialism is the equal sharing of misery."
. . . **Winston Churchill**

An Answer For Unemployment.

. . . *Bring Our Jobs Back Home.*

Of the myriad of domestic problems to be addressed by President Obama, probably the most pressing issue will be unemployment. This could possibly reduce other incentive initiatives.

No doubt a combination of economic reasons and finger pointing is to blame as causes of our current unemployment problem. Government policy, taxes, trade unions, wages and benefits, greedy or incompetent management can all share the blame. However, it is the American consumer who allowed this is as much to blame as anybody.

While it may not be the root cause of our present situation, no one will deny that a lot of American jobs have been lost in recent years to overseas industry. World trade has become more diversified, with new markets opening for our products and for developing nations competing in the 21st century seeking our business. Seemingly our own manufacturers and retailers have turned their backs on their employees and customers by disregarding both the loyalties of the people who built their business and the communities who supported and grew with them. We let it happen.

It started out slowly, say in the 1960's and 70's. The economy was still increasing at an annual rate of 10% or more, and wage increases were largely matched by increases in productivity and technology. However, one by one for various reasons some of our well established name brands started to farm out production to overseas sources. Recall the surprise when buying a familiar brand of clothing and finding it was produced in Malaysia or the Philippines. Now it is difficult to find any item of clothing made in the United States.

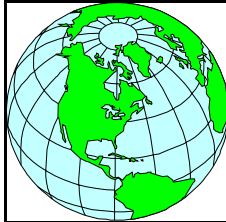
My personal experience was as an owner of a business selling industrial supplies. *Everything* we sold came was bought directly from American manufacturers. Our customers wanted the best. We knew most of our suppliers personally and had visited several of their factories and were familiar with what they were making.

As an example, one of our main stock items was industrial fasteners; nuts and bolts, which are still the mainstay of heavy duty construction, farm equipment and the machinery used in our factories. A number of national chains came along selling foreign made fasteners to select industries. At first the quality was inferior but improvements were made to meet stricter U. S. standards. We lost a lot of business.

It was not long before one by one U. S. manufacturers went out of business. The next step was selling their specialized machinery to the overseas producers until today we must depend on foreign producers for fasteners. Our country is no longer a leader in the industry, and we have given away the technology and methods to produce these goods. The same thing has happened in a large number of other industries, including automobiles.

Another significant factor is that some of our manufacturers have built their own factories in Mexico and other places where labor costs were lower. Some have remained in the United States but use imported parts and components. Whatever the circumstances, we are seeing American jobs lost along with the income our workers were putting into the economy. In all fairness we acknowledge that a few foreign manufacturers, particularly in the automotive industry have built factories here hiring American workers.

How bad is it? Go to any store and see for yourself. Try to find clothing, electronics, household items, light bulbs, or appliances



made in this country. I recently visited a store that always reliably sold U.S. goods. I found kitchen appliances, industrial grade electric tools, clothing, toys, books and many other items formerly made in Wisconsin. These were all marked, "Made in China." This also includes the boxes they were packaged in. How many jobs have been lost in Wisconsin and the rest of the country? I did notice items for sale made in the U.S., priced competitively with imported merchandise. This proves we could still compete if our retailers and customers insisted.

Another problem caused by the loss of jobs and manufacturing revenue is the balance of trade our country faces. Balance of trade is the excess of export revenue for a country over what is imported. In our case it is the other way around. The U. S. Census Bureau reports that for 2008 we imported about \$750 Billion more than we exported. During the past 10 years the total is about Six Trillion, about the same as the increase in national debt during that time. Maybe this isn't just a coincidence. We buy more than we sell from virtually all other countries in the world. Not just oil from OPEC. This is a reason that the dollar has fallen in value against other currencies, and undoubtedly is a factor in our own financial problems. We are over our heads in debt and Congress really doesn't seem to care.

Our national debt is composed of outstanding bonds and other securities owed to investors by our government. Much of this to various foreign governments and investors. In the meantime our Congress and Presidents have been making promises and spending money as if all they had to do is simply print more. It doesn't work that way.

How do we solve the problem? Assuming that if we want to decrease unemployment, it would be easier to bring back jobs we lost rather than attempt creating jobs by spending huge amounts of taxpayer money on costly programs that won't necessarily work. One suggestion would be a blue ribbon committee or commission formed by the government to index and identify manufacturers who have sent jobs overseas, and retailers who sell primarily imported goods.

Ask for their justifications and arguments. If they blame government and high taxes, put the blame where it belongs. If they blame union interference and high wages, is this really the problem and again, put the blame where it belongs. If they blame environmental considerations or tax loopholes, compromises between fact and fiction. If it comes down to a matter of cost, just how much cost are they talking about? Does shipping and overseeing a foreign operation save that much money? Identify problems and let our legislators know that something has to be done.

Presently our Legislators in Madison and Washington are pre-occupied with a number of laws which would be

"Rather than spending billions of dollars on government programs to retrain workers for jobs that do not exist, could it be more effective to try and bring back jobs that have been lost overseas?"

harmful to business with little benefit to the general populace. These are not the answers and only make things worse for our economy.

The point of my argument is this, rather than spending billions of dollars on government programs to retrain workers for jobs that do not exist, could it be more effective to try and bring back jobs that have been sent overseas? The bottom line is still our economy.

In the meantime, whenever you make a purchase, look at the box or label to see where the product was produced and think of your friends and neighbors who are out of a job.

Jim Frink - BCTA

January Meeting Notes.

Monthly BCTA meeting January 15, 2009 at Tiletown Brewing.

President Richard Parins discussed property taxes. He noted that when a municipality's property values vary significantly from fair market value for three years, state law requires re-assessment. It will be interesting to see if declining property values stimulate reassessments. It is difficult to establish fair market values now, when there are few sales and a large proportion is short sales and foreclosures. Richard recalled that Proposition 13 in California was to protect people in their homes.

Paul Zeller, a Village of Allouez trustee since 1996, and former Brown County Board member commented on the changes in government since he began serving as a trustee: Times were good through 2005, and then the squeeze on budgets began. The Village has frozen supervisors' salaries for 2009. The inflexibility of labor contracts is a most difficult area. Services may need to be reduced to keep the Village's budget balanced. Paul is concerned about the direction of the state and federal governments. John Gower, an NWTC board member, reported that NWTC is anticipating a \$650,000 reduction in state aid. He believes that capitalizing labor costs is a problem deserving attention. Another construction referendum is likely in 2011.

The federal government's stimulus and bailout packages were discussed. It was reported that some financial institutions were grudgingly accepting federal bailout dollars only because their competitors were receiving the cash injections. It was agreed that the federal stimulus package was more about harvesting votes than creating permanent jobs.

Richard Parins reported that in a stealth vote on Sunday, January 11, the U.S. Senate passed the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009, a pet project of Majority Leader Harry Reid. More than 3 million acres will be eliminated from energy leasing by restricting various areas as "federal wilderness" or "wild and scenic" river ways. Much of this land became available when the ban on domestic drilling in Western states expired last fall. Instead of a risky vote for an unpopular new energy ban, this legislation will let the federal government absorb this land so it cannot be developed.

The pork-laden, \$10 billion proposal locks up millions of acres of energy-rich property by designating it as federal wilderness area where not even a bicycle would be permitted to travel. So much for "Drill Here, Drill Now!"

BCTA Directors elected for three-year terms were: Frank Bennett, Elliot Christenson, Ron Erickson, David Gauthier, Otto Junkermann and Tom Sladek.

The next meeting will be February 19, 2009. Our speaker will be Harry Maier, Chairman of the Green Bay Redevelopment Authority.

Dave Nelson – Secretary

"A government big enough to give you everything you want is strong enough to take everything you have."

. . . **Thomas Jefferson**

"Liberals claim to want to give a hearing to other views, but then are shocked and offended to discover that there are other views.

. . . **William F. Buckley, Jr.**

The STATE OF THE STATE

Governor Doyle delivered his annual State of the State address discussing our state's economic outlook, \$5.75 billion deficit, and briefly touching on his priorities for this budget. This address comes at a time when jobs are being lost, businesses are closing, and consumer confidence is at an all time low.

He mentioned this is not a time for new big government programs, and that priority one should be creating and retaining jobs. He didn't specify how he plans on solving our economic problems while both creating jobs and balancing the budget.

Wisconsin's deficit is fourth largest in the nation and #1 per capita. Since Doyle has taken office, government spending has increased by 25 percent. The state employee workforce has grown by 4,900 in the last year alone after promising to cut state employees by 10,000 by 2010. Private sector jobs have dropped by 66,000.

The Governor praised some accomplishments, taking credit for Republican initiatives such as making health insurance premiums tax deductible and eliminating the tax on social security. He lauded himself for bringing Wisconsin out of the top-ten taxed states, which would not have happened if the Republican controlled assembly had not eliminated 98 percent of the Governor's proposed tax increases.

The priorities of this legislative session should be addressing our economic downturn, creating and retaining jobs, and expanding business development. By realizing how we arrived at this point, we can hopefully not repeat the same mistakes. We should reduce spending, lower taxes, and put more money in the pockets of Wisconsin residents. That is how we will create jobs and pull out of this economic recession.

Rep. John Nygren

Ice Cream & The Election.

Who worries about "the cow" when it is all about the "Ice Cream? While this internet story is obviously over-simplified, it is a good observation of how people sometimes seem to think.

A third grade teacher wanted to teach her class about politics and decided to have an election for class president from nominees selected from her class. The nominees would be narrowed down to two by the class based on their characteristics and would make a campaign speech to the class who would then vote. Jamie and Olivia were nominated.

They were both good students and popular in the class. On the day of the election, Jamie gave the first speech, and gave specific ideas on how to make the classroom a better place, and promised to do his very best if elected. Everyone applauded.

Olivia's speech was shorter but more concise. "If you will vote for me, I will give you ice cream." She then sat down and the class went wild. She didn't have to say any more.

A discussion followed. How did she plan to pay for the ice cream? She wasn't sure. Would her parents buy it or would the class pay for it. She didn't know and the class really didn't care. All they were thinking about was ice cream. Olivia won the election by a landslide.

In the recent elections many of the candidates offered ice cream every time they opened their mouths. The majority of voters wanted the ice cream. The balance knew they were going to have to feed the cows and clean up the mess.

As President Reagan once said, "If someone comes and says that he is from the government and is here to help you, run like hell."

Things That Make Us Wonder.

President-Elect Obama has made the economy a top priority, introducing a number of stimulus programs to achieve this goal. This is fine as long as there is a little money left over for running the government, and we don't get too far in the hole.

If we are serious about putting people to work and stimulating the economy, can't we figure out a way to put more goods in our stores made in this country? Poor retail sales are a sign of the weak economy. So what, most of the goods on shelves is made in China anyway. Even clothing and other items with well-known American names.

Public encouragement to "**Buy American**" would give the message to our manufacturers and retailers that "*enough is enough.*" A little PR could be a heck of a lot less expensive than all of the stimulus programs that have been proposed. The bottom line is putting people back to work, not seeing how much money big brother can spend.

* * * * *

Governor Doyle has stated he would like to see zero traffic deaths per year in Wisconsin. We can agree with him on that.

Cracking down on drunk drivers, seat belts and better highways are certainly steps in the right direction. Getting drivers to be more courteous and following the rules of the road is important. Slowing down a little and not weaving in and out just to get in front would be helpful. Watching NASCAR should not be a substitute for driver education.

* * * * *

What is sometimes difficult to understand is how environmental interests show their concern for future generations in preserving the atmosphere, the water, the food we eat, etc. etc. These are important and we should all do whatever we can to preserve our resources.

It is the cost of these efforts that is being passed on to future generations to pay that may be a burden. Examples are what will the final cost be to clean up the Fox River, or how much should industry be forced to pay to reduce the final 10% of emissions when they have already spent millions to reduce the first

90%. Money is also an endangered resource.

* * * * *

The Wis. Dept. of Public Instruction has been preparing the stage for mandatory 4-yr old kindergartens. This has been a controversial subject with both good and bad points of view.

In recent years more and more 4 year olds have been attending pre-schools often sponsored by neighborhood churches at the option of parents and at the parents expense. While church sponsorship opens a can of worms, in most cases this takes the background to gaining knowledge of reading, numbers, following directions of a teacher and getting along with their peers. A lot the same as could be accomplished at a public school but without an expensive teacher or the rest of taxpayer supported overhead. Too bad some kind of compromise couldn't be worked out. In most any scenario it could be as effective but less expensive.

* * * * *

We note that local TV stations have been able to replace their political campaign advertising revenues with commercials for personal injury law firms. They promise huge rewards if you were injured in an accident, or want to sign on to a class action suit against a manufacturer if you had taken some of their products which may have been deemed harmful to others.

These commercials make it look easy as long as you can find someone to sue.

* * * * *

A recent Press-Gazette article noted that even the states gambling casinos were noticing the downside effects of the economy.

We even read that business in Las Vegas has been slow recently.

One positive note could be that more people with less money to spend in their pockets know better than trying to get rich quick at the gambling tables.

* * * * *

Perhaps one reason that AIG got top priority in receiving Federal bailout money is that they happened to insure the pension trust fund of the United States Congress.

* * * * *

Last summer when the price of

gasoline was sky high no politician would dare to propose adding even more taxes to the price.

Now the price is down for who knows how long and Gov. Doyle has suggested reintroducing indexing as a way of adding a cent or two per gallon each year to the consumer cost. The DOT needs it for their highways. It would seem more appropriate if the Billion dollars or so the governor filched from the highway fund to balance the budget be returned.

We also hear of various proposals to raise the Federal gas tax. Maybe they can guarantee the pride of crude oil will remain under \$50.00/barrel.

* * * * *

A reporter from the St. Petersburg Times analyzed all of Barack Obamas campaign speeches and counted 510 different promises of what he would do if elected. There must be something in there for you and me plus some things we probably all may hope he forgets.

Pres. Bush only made 177 promises when he first ran in 2000, and Clinton made 304 in 1992.

* * * * *

First bills taken up in the present assembly session would bar the state from doing business from companies that ship jobs overseas and require the state to spend 2 percent of its budget on products made in Wisconsin.

Great idea to support American and state industry if they can find any companies that qualify.

* * * * *

Illegal immigration is a controversial issue that was not discussed during the recent election campaign. Most of us probably have no problem with those that enter the country legally and eventually become tax paying citizens and appreciate the value of citizenship.

The *Los Angeles Times* reports that 40% of workers in their county work for cash and do not pay taxes as they are predominantly illegal immigrants. This group accounts for 95% of the murders, 2/3rd of all births and 35% of California's prison population. Over 300,000 illegal citizens in L. A. County are living in garages. While the exact numbers may be difficult to prove, it probably contributes to California being deep in debt.

Is it possible that some of our political leaders see potential votes

rather than existing problems?

* * * * *

Never underestimate the ability of politicians to dream up new taxes to raise money. The city of Seattle is proposing a 20-cent tax on all paper and plastic bags from all grocery, drug, and convenience stores. To be collected and reported by the stores.

The declared purpose is to finance re-cycling and solid waste disposal programs. *"It's for the environment."* A referendum to oppose the issue is being planned.

* * * * *

There is a lot of finger pointing as to the high health care in this country. A report from the McKinsey Global Institute claims that much of this cost is due to outpatient care, which was originally designed to save money by eliminating overnight stays for certain procedures. Hospitals and other providers have found this to be more profitable.

Health care accounted for 15.3% of the U. S. economy in 2005.

* * * * *

Governor Doyle has come out as "not being opposed" to another increase in the states cigarette tax. He said he wanted to raise it to \$1.25 last year but settled for only \$1.00.

He said his only interest was to discourage smoking. If that is the case, why not raise the tax to about \$25.00 a pack, or outlaw smoking all together with fines and jail sentences for offenders?

* * * * *

The state claims it has been holding back on hiring new employees due to current economic conditions.

One place where an exception might be in order. The Dept. of Revenue would like to hire an additional 155 auditors to enforce their myriad of tax laws. They claim there is about \$1 Billion of uncollected tax revenue floating around which could help pay the deficit.

A good auditor can sniff out about \$2 Million a year due the state. Unfortunately DOR auditors aren't very popular and the pay isn't that great.

* * * * *

The Wis. Dept. of Corrections says it needs more than \$1.2 Billion in the next decade to provide another 8,900 new beds and needed repairs at

existing facilities. A number of the states counties also have indicated they need new or improved jail facilities in the next few years.

Part of this is due to population increases and stricter laws calling for mandatory sentences. While most people seem to approve of the stricter sentences, it is can cost taxpayers over \$50,000 per year to keep someone in jail. Multiply that by a few years. Other expenses may be the cost of returning a person to normal life after being released from prison.

We all know there are both violent and non-violent people in the system. Crimes and violations of all the laws in the statutes must be punished, but is this becoming a rather expensive industry for the taxpayers of Wisconsin to support? We live in a society where just about every new piece of legislation calls for fines and penalties for con-compliance. Look at the statutes.

Maybe someday in the future someone will come up with ideas that work better than what we do now.

* * * * *

For the last five years the Menominee Tribe has been seeking an OK to build a mega-casino at the site of the Dairyland Greyhound track near Kenosha. The Mohegan Tribe of Connecticut which operates some of the largest casinos in the country has signed on as a partner, and this would be the largest casino in the state. convenient for visitors from Illinois.

So far the Federal government has refused permission for the project. Also a number if gambling facilities have been built or proposed since a state wide referendum several years ago calling for a moratorium on more gambling.

* * * * *

Despite the Economy, or perhaps because of it, the Wisconsin Senate wants to reintroduce their *"Healthy Wisconsin"* universal health plan. They have all the details figured out except how to convince Wisconsin business it is worth \$16Billion a year.

A report from the *Wisconsin Policy Institute* claims that if enacted it would attract large number off welfare recipients from other parts the

country, the same as other state programs have been accused of in the past.

* * * * *

Present state law makes the fifth DUI offense a felony, punishable by a prison sentence. Legislation has been introduced to make the third offense a felony in an effort to get repeat offenders off of the roads. We would all agree that repeat drunken drivers must be kept off of the highways somehow.

One problem is it's estimated to cost at least \$100 to \$150 Million per year for prison beds, extra judges, etc. to handle the estimated 3,000 additional offenders per year. No doubt the trial lawyer industry would do all right though.

* * * * *

The DOT has determined that the Allouez-Ashwaubenon Bridge and Hwy, 172 are in need of a \$38 Million repair job which will last into 2010. That is when they plan to start working on US41. The biggest job will be replacing bridge decking (concrete) which will require considerable inconvenience to the 84,000 or so vehicles using the highway each day.

We don't question the need for the project but can't see what they are doing to make the road much better or safer when they are done. For example, there are places where an extra lane to provide better merging could be provided. They are adding 3 "crash investigation sites. What do you expect for only \$38 Million?

* * * * *

There has been criticism with the amount of money spent on Pres. Obama's inauguration. It was a splendid affair. We were surprised that so few VIP's had the courtesy to remain in the \$3M reviewing stand until the end of the parade. A lot of people who traveled to Washington didn't get to see much of anything because of the crowds.

* * * * *

Last year, Brown, Outagamie, and Winnebago counties agreed to build a \$9.9M recycling processing plant. They expected to make \$2.6M a year selling recycled material to offset other disposal costs.

As it turns out, with the poor economy there is no market for recycled materials, making the plant a liability rather than an asset.

It would seem that if we are truly

going to pursue recycling, greater effort should be made to find viable uses for recycled materials. This is one area where tax breaks and incentives could be useful. Take some of the taxpayer money being spent on ethanol production and find new uses for recycled products.

* * * * *

It will be interesting to see how all the requests for funds from the "Economic Stimulus Plans" play out.

Whenever Govt. money is available there are always those who will connive a way to get a share rather than take care of themselves. This time, Industries, lenders, banks and government entities have all made a claim for their share.

Unfortunately it appears than any funds that come this way will be for projects to increase employment which could even make the situation worse for the state budget.

In the meantime, Pres. Obama has warned of Trillion dollar federal deficits. Whatever the outcome, it will be probably be a problem for our grandchildren to take care.

* * * * *

It would have been interesting to see Gov. Doyle before the House Appropriations Committee asking for federal help on the \$5B state budget deficit. First he would have to explain why Wisconsin being one of the 10 highest taxed states in the nation was short of funds, then state his case why taxpayers in other states should be asked to help us out.

* * * * *

If federal funds do come to Wisconsin to create employment, the Milwaukee Sewerage District is ready. A *Journal-Sentinel* article reports their want list could put 2,500 people to work just updating and repairing their system.

* * * * *

Governor Doyle has stated he does not intend to include pay raises for state workers in the next budget. This won't make much difference to the Legislature as they already received a nice pay raise for the current session. They missed the chance to set a good example of fiscal responsibility to state employees.

* * * * *

University of Wisconsin scientists have been among those noting that research projects in the United States have been falling beyond foreign countries. Mainly due to the lack of funding

to Universities and Colleges.

Their solution was research centers sponsored by the government and private sources.

Some kind of research project may be necessary in the very near future to provide viable alternate fuels.

President Obama has stated he wants to reduce our dependence on foreign oil. However some of his first actions were to declare 3,000,000 acres of potential western oil reserves "off-limits" for exploration as well as reversing previous rules which allowed certain off-shore oil exploration. That being done, we may well have to put more emphasis on developing alternate fuels.

* * * * *

President Obama has directed auto manufacturers to produce more fuel efficient vehicles with better emission standards. In the past, this meant producing less fuel from more crude so this may also take some work.

The increased cost per car was not disclosed. Neither was an estimate of when people can afford to buy cars again.

* * * * *

What happened to the \$5M that the City of Green Bay owed on the Younkens property deal? Is it still being appealed or was it already paid?

* * * * *

The Wisconsin Covenant was supposed to help fund college education for state students who agreed to remain and work in the state after graduation.

Problem is that not enough funding was provided and so far 35,000 have signed to participate. In the meantime, the cost of attending college keeps rising and the states treasury keeps declining.

* * * * *

More and more stories are coming out about all of the pork that is being loaded into the stimulus plan as it gets ready for Congressional and Presidential approval. There are a lot of debts to be paid

Also Congress will likely take advantage of the opportunity to stick a few policy items in their final bill. This is one of the dangers of a one party system. We will see what happens.

* * * * *

If any Federal incentive is passed out to the states to spend at their

discretion, Wisconsin will be ready.

Gov. Doyle has appointed the President of Madison Gas & Electric to head the "Office of Recovery & Reinvestment" to determine the best way to use the "billions of dollars" the state expects in federal incentive funds. He will be assisted by Alan Fish, a vice-chancellor at UW Madison who is married to Doyle chief of staff.

Whatever happens, we will probably still have a big state deficit and wonder where all the money went.

* * * * *

Before the inauguration

President-elect Obama warned of trillion dollar federal budget deficits for years to come, and would force his administration to impose tighter fiscal discipline.

He will have some challenges with the economic stimulus plans and upcoming federal budget.

As usual, lots of things to wonder about.

Jim Frink

"Things That Make Us Wonder" consists of thoughts that occur to us, taxpayer related in some way, from the days news events. Some are 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 or suggestions are welcome to include in this section of the "TAX TIMES."

Correction. In the January *Tax Times*, the article "Schools and your taxes" referred to revenue sharing and the QEO as being the same. This was an error as revenue sharing refers to direct payments by the state based on a formula made to school districts while the QEO is a tool to limit property taxes for school purposes on your property tax assessments. We apologize for any confusion this may have caused.

"If you don't read the newspaper you are uninformed. If you do read the newspaper you are misinformed." . . . Mark Twain

The TAX TIMES

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

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

Address Service Requested.

Inside This Issue

Eliminate the QEO? Now is not the time.
Just say NO to the stimulus plan.
National Debt Update.
2009 Taxpayers Survey.
An Answer For Unemployment.
January Meeting Notes.
The State Of The State.
Ice Cream and The Election.
Things That Make Us Wonder.
and more.

The TAX TIMES - February, 2009

BCTA Meeting and Events Schedule – MARK YOUR CALENDARS.

- Tuesday - February 17, 2009. Primary election. State Supt. Of Schools.**
- Thursday - February 19, 2009. BCTA Monthly Meeting, 12:00 Noon**
Titletown Brewing Co., “Frost Room.”
Speaker: Harry Maier, Chairman Green Bay Redevelopment Authority
“Update on Green Bay and downtown development.”
- Thursday - March 19, 2009. BCTA Monthly Meeting, 12:00 Noon**
Titletown Brewing Co., “Frost Room.”
Program to be announced.
- Thursday - April 16, 2009. BCTA Monthly Meeting, 12:00 Noon**
Titletown Brewing Co., “Frost Room.”
Program to be announced.
- Tuesday - April 7, 2009. General election. State Supt. Of Schools,**
State Supreme Court Justice. Local elections.

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

Meetings are open to the public.

BCTA Members, their guests and other interested parties are cordially invited to attend and participate in our open discussions.

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



February, 2009



“I contend that for a nation to tax itself into prosperity is like a man standing in a bucket and trying to lift himself up by the handle.”

. . . Winston Churchill

“In general, the art of government consists of taking as much money as possible from one party of citizens to give to the other.”

. . . Voltaire

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.