

Buzzard Breath Budget.

"Anyone can have bad breath, Marge, but you could knock a buzzard off a sh-t wagon." – to quote George Carlin, R.I.P., from his seminal, comic album, "Class Clown," while demonstrating one of the "7 Words You Cannot Say on Television." If only Ed McMahon were around to introduce a reply to the current State Budget! Wisconsin Budget, the oxymoron of oxymorons.

That is how bad the latest state budget smells. There are only 5 of those 7 'words you cannot say on television', left since the 1972 recording -- none if you count cable and dish television -- but I want to use them all to denounce the derelicts who constructed this sh-t wagon budget. I'm surprised these so-called legislators didn't try to tax Cow Sh-t again.

And I'd like to start with "Gary Sherman, late night hypocrite." The Bayfield Democrat was so dubbed by the liberal Isthmus weekly editor, Bill Lueders, also a hero on open government issues as president of the state Freedom of Information Council. Lueders nailed it when noting Sherman had raved like a maniac on the Assembly floor during a Republican-led late night budget session in 2008. Follow this link to read Lueders' scathing review and listen to Sherman's rant:

<http://www.thedailypage.com/isthmus/article.php?article=26240>

But here's the gist: "This is unprofessional. This is stupid. We have no business to be here. There's people in this room with cancer, there's people in this room with heart disease, a third of this room has high blood pressure, there's elderly people, there's pregnant people. What the hell are we doing?" What does Rep. Sherman say, as a member of the Joint Committee on Finance, when his party does THE EXACT SAME THING?! Nothing! Not a word of reprobation. Not even a whisper.

As his party leaders, in secret, jammed and crammed the budget, like a Thanksgiving turkey for Diamond Jimbo, full of the most pro-government giblets and gravy, Sherman, an attorney who fancies himself as rational, did zero, zilch, nada. This may be the only time Lueders and I will ever agree, as he concludes, "What, really, can the man say? 'I'm a frickin' hypocrite'?"

We don't need a bigger government that takes over health insurance and road building, and feeds on investors and refiners and local governments to become the mighty sumo who throws private business out of the ring. Imagine, if you will, an 800-pound big, bald-headed Doyle, sweating and stomping in one of those sumo thongs. That is our next (Now?) budget – a steaming 800-pound sumo Doyle!

We must get back to government basics – public sanitation, law and order, clean water. I mean, I love McDonalds' and the ilk, but I'm yearning for the simplicity of the In 'N' Out Burger of my West Coast days. They didn't try to do everything. In 'N' Out Burger sells hamburgers, cheeseburgers, Double-doubles, fries, drinks and shakes. That's it. No fried chicken or fish, no sandwich wraps or breakfast burritos, no soups or salads, none of that San Francisco frou, frou, food. The joints are clean, the clerks snappy and happy, the service quick with a smile and a thank you. And they got a reputation that spans the country for top food at fair prices, All-American, man!

That is what I (We) want in our government, a simple, well-defined set of rules all men and women can understand. I wonder how the 4500 or so words in the Constitution of the United States, Amendments notwithstanding, stacks up to the current State of Wisconsin Budget? So, while Dems have the trifecta and we are stuck with this sh-t wagon, consider that 2010 is almost here. We must turn out every scoundrel, scallywag, and sleazebag who voted for this pile of shinola. If we can find them, replace them with honest folks, no matter the party, who want a lean, focused government

Richard Parins - President

The BROWN COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION
Promoting Fiscal Responsibility in Government

A Budget or Government By Decree?

A question for you: What do Mandating higher automobile insurance coverage for drivers, Allowing police to stop drivers only for not wearing seat belts, Rewriting the states Tort reform laws to that a party only found 1% negligent of an injury could be 100% responsible for damages, Allowing illegal immigrants an identification card allowing driving privileges, Requiring police to keep records of the race of drivers involved in traffic stops to monitor racial profiling, Requiring Wisconsin county clerks to issue domestic partner licenses to same sex couples, Requiring insurance companies to cover autism expenses, and about 80 or so other similar proposals have in common?

The answer is they were all included for consideration in the 2009-2010 Wisconsin State Budget presently being crafted by the Legislature and Governor.

A second question for you: What do Mandating higher automobile insurance coverage for drivers, Allowing police to stop drivers for not wearing seat belts, Rewriting the states Tort reform laws to that a party only found 1% negligent of an injury could be 100% responsible for damages, Allowing illegal immigrants an identification card allowing driving privileges, Requiring police to keep records of the race of drivers involved in traffic stops to monitor racial profiling, Requiring Wisconsin county clerks to issue domestic partner licenses to same sex couples, Requiring insurance companies to cover autism expenses, and about 80 or so other similar proposals have in common?

The answer is that they should have absolutely nothing to do whatsoever with the state budget, a document intended to determine state spending and provide the necessary revenue to pay for it. If approved as part of the budget, these items become state law. They could, however, effect your pocketbook and style of living.

By any measure you want to use, the financial condition of our state can only be described as a basket case. The plundering of funds from segregated accounts, new taxes and raising of fees to unreasonable limits, and borrowing more money which will impact future budgets, reduction of anticipated revenues due to the economy have all contributed. Waste and poor fiscal management started the problem. We acknowledge these are not necessarily new problems. Once upon a time the state constitution called for a balanced budget with no exceptions. Little by little things have gone out of control.

It seems there are two major problems with the budget process in Wisconsin. #1-Our elected officials do not understand that it is not wise to spend more than you have available, and that their constituents are limited in their ability to pay more for state government when they too have other pressing needs. With this in mind the budget process should be a straightforward process with little regard for partisan politics. Unfortunately it doesn't work that way.

Problem #2 is the habit of loading the budget document with dozens of policy items that have little or nothing to do with the state budget. Plain and simple they are either partisan legislation that would probably have little chance of passing even a single party government such as we now have if they were properly introduced, properly publicized and subject to public hearings and scrutiny as law provides.

Many of the items can easily be identified as paybacks for political contributions which helped put many of our legislators in office, or ideological mandates that may or may not be in the best interests of the citizens or economy of the state.

For example, has the populace of our state been contacting

their representatives asking for higher automobile insurance coverage when they can barely pay for what they have now? Does anyway who may be remotely responsible for damages in a lawsuit want to be found guilty for 100% because there is no one else to sue? You can be sure the trial lawyers who as a group contributed heavily to achieve power in Madison had something to do with these proposals. We are already seeing more television ads encouraging people to contact personnel injury firms if they had any kind of accident at all. Does the majority of citizens of Wisconsin actually want to allow people to settle here illegally taking advantage of the benefits we have earned and paid for?

Overall a wide variety of special interests are represented. Other proposals favor trade unions, highway contractors, and others who expect a return on their investment. One clause calls for the registration of all contractors in the state, big and small, and whether their trade requires state licensing or not. This could create a useful data base for all sorts of agencies and organizations.

At this time, the budget is being debated in both the Senate and Legislature. We acknowledge that some of the questionable items have been removed or modified by the Senate and Legislature and their conference committees. A finalized version will be presented to the Governor for his signature. He then takes personal responsibility with whatever he decides to do with his veto pen.

A big problem with the above is that both fiscal and policy items are being debated. Many if not most of the policy items are plain poor legislation, and if approved will be on our statutes for ever and ever. There has been ample publicity about closed door sessions, late hour compromises, and single party decisions to make one wonder what is going on. Apparently open meeting laws only apply to the peasants on the city councils and county boards back home. There has been very little opportunity for public input, and what there has been was strictly ceremonial and for show.

How policy items ever got to be placed in the budget, or if it such a practice in other states would take some research. In the past, they would be added at the last minute when budget negotiations stalled, as a compromise between the two parties to get on track. Not so this year. The budget was loaded with legislation from the start that had no business being there. As Representative Nelson, Legislature Majority Leader, explained to the BCTA in April, the Democrats have a 14 year backlog of proposals to address. They aren't wasting any time.

While the state keeps digging deeper into debt, the debate over the budget keeps getting sidetracked over changes in both fiscal and policy items. In the confusion new items and spending proposals keep creeping in, losing focus on the main issue of providing a budget.

In summary, like any true budget, the two items to be addressed should be expenditures and income. I am sure this was the intent of the authors of the State Constitution. All other legislation should be handled on its merits, introduced per protocol, given public hearings to determine its need and acceptance, debated in due course and either approved or disapproved accordingly.

Burying policy items (and hidden taxes) in a two thousand page document is not the way to do business if we are expected to trust our elected officials. Is this really the way we want our government to be run?

Jim Frink – BCTA

"The problem with socialism is that you eventually run out of other people's money."

. . . **Margaret Thatcher**

Conference Committee & Senate Pass Compromise Budget

The former Chancellor of Germany, Otto Von Bismarck, is often attributed with the saying, "There are two things you don't want to see being made - sausage and legislation." Ain't that the truth, especially when you learn how the majority party has been handling the budget with secret, back-door meetings, completely shutting out the minority party from negotiations, releasing budget documents just minutes before voting on them, and holding late night floor votes when folks are in bed sleeping. Again this week, we had more of the same. But, while you may not want to see how legislation is being made, I feel that it is something you need to see in order to be a better informed citizen.

As you may know, in order for any bill to become law, the Senate and Assembly must pass the bill in identical form. Because the two houses passed budget bills with 189 differences between them, the normal procedure is for a conference committee to be convened to work out those differences and draft a final budget document that cannot be amended. But with this particular budget, the committee wasn't created right away because it gave Democratic leaders the opportunity to meet in secret, behind closed doors where they could forge an agreement between themselves and not be in violation of the open meetings laws.

A week after the Senate passed its version of the budget, a Conference Committee was hastily convened at 5:30 p.m. on June 24. No motions to change the budget were allowed, and no actual budget negotiations or discussions took place. In fact, co-chair of the committee, Speaker Sheridan, spent most of the meeting merely reading the titles of the 189 differences between the Assembly and Senate budgets, and then the meeting ended.

Thursday, June 25, was a very busy day. Senator Decker, co-chair of the Conference Committee, said that a Conference Committee meeting that was scheduled for 8:00 a.m. that morning would be delayed because motions were being drafted. In the meantime, Assembly Democrats and Senate Democrats spent most of the day discussing the budget in their closed caucuses.

At 8:30 p.m., a 129 page non-partisan Legislative Fiscal Bureau (LFB) document was publicly released detailing the Conference Committee budget language. That was quite a feat considering the conference committee had never discussed anything in the document! Clearly, this compromise could only have been the result of back-door negotiations that had been conducted in secret all week by the Democratic leadership. By 9:15 p.m., the Conference Committee had rubber-stamped the Conference Committee report on a 4-2 vote. LFB then briefed the Senate Republicans on the provisions that had just been approved by the Conference Committee. Shortly after midnight, the full Senate was called back into session and within fifteen minutes, the budget passed 17-15 with all Republicans and just one Democrat voting no.

Significant, comprehensive changes to a two-year, \$62 billion state budget that will affect every resident and taxpayer of this state were submitted and approved in less than four hours by two separate voting bodies.

The majority party likes to tell the media that their process is open and transparent, that they are working in a bipartisan fashion, and that they have included the minority party in their negotiations. They must think that if they say these catchwords long enough and loud enough that the public will actually start believing them. Fortunately, the editorial boards statewide have seen through their shenanigans. Without a doubt, actions do speak louder than words.

State Rep. Karl Van Roy

National Debt Update.

As of the end of June, the U.S. National Debt had reached **\$11,377,738,030,947.62**. An increase of \$51.4 Billion over last month at this time. That's eleven trillion, three hundred and seventy-seven billion, or just a little over 11 trillion for those who like to round things off.

It amounts to \$37,126.66 for every man, woman and child who is a U. S. Citizen, and is increasing at a rate of about \$12.80 per each day. Don't worry, Pres. Obama claims his health care plan will save money even though it will add another trillion dollars to the debt.

Jim Frink - BCTA

"The Constitution...is a mere thing of wax in the hands of the judiciary which they may twist and shape into any form they please."

. . . Thomas Jefferson

Articles and views appearing in the "TAX TIMES" do not necessarily represent the official position of the 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.

Creating Money Will Solve All of Our Problems.

It's pretty clear that national politicians have become addicted to printing money. But they should be more creative spending it.

Why bail out Detroit? Instead send every adult a blank coupon for purchasing an American-made car. We'll pick the vehicle. Automakers will redeem the coupon through government for freshly created cash. Everyone will benefit.

Mortgage lenders can be as risky as ever. If they lose money, print more to replace it. Having a bank run? Send Treasury agents with boxes of cash to give to depositors. And why can't we develop programs where people send their mortgage invoice to government to pay whenever they're having trouble?

Let's end poverty! Pay companies to hire the poor. Then raise the minimum wage to \$10, \$100, or \$1000 per hour--it doesn't really matter. Simply send the bill to the Treasury. The Federal Reserve will create the money. Problem solved.

Worried about fraud? No need to be. We'll just create money to cover any amount that government misdirects.

Surely any problem can be solved by printing cash: unemployment, health care, global warming. We can fight all the wars we wish. And while we're at it, let's print enough money to cover the federal debt.

Printing money can create heaven on earth. It's change we can believe in.

Scott Liddicoat - BCTA

ONLY IN AMERICA.

ONLY IN AMERICA:

- **Must we spend billions because we can't let Chrysler go bankrupt, and then let Chrysler go bankrupt?**
- **Congress can force Fannie and Freddie to buy sub-prime loans and then blame Fannie and Freddie for buying sub-prime loans.**
- **Force the lay offs of CEO's with giant severance packages and nationalize their companies for the tax-payers to pick up!**
- **A major crisis requires swift action to pass a bill without reading it, then vacation three days before the President has time to sign it.**

ONLY IN AMERICA:

- **You can legally be illegal.**
- **The Congress makes laws that they don't have to follow.**
- **The Vice-President describes jobs as a 3 letter word.**
- **Does the military get investigated by homeland security as possible terrorists while our borders are wide open.**

ONLY IN AMERICA:

- **You can get a tax refund on taxes you didn't pay.**
- **You can blame others when you don't perform.**
- **You can have more rights being illegal than you do being legal.**
- **You can be 13 and have an abortion without telling your parents, but must have a written note if you miss school.**
- **Are you punished for good performance and revered for nonperformance.**

ONLY IN AMERICA:

- **Can you call large corporations evil, when 99.9% of Americans work for companies with less than 500 employees.**
- **Can Chrysler get 10 Billion aid for a company with 30,000 employees? This is \$33,333 for each employee.**
- **You don't pay your income taxes and become Secretary of the Treasury.**
- **We care about three guys that get water up their nose, while our enemies are beheading us and blowing up crowds of people with suicide bombings.**
- **You say other interrogation techniques work but you have no idea of what those techniques are?**
- **You can be president without a birth certificate.**
- **And finally, whatever goes wrong, you can simply blame it on the previous administration.**

Adopted from the internet.

"By costing us jobs, raising taxes would trigger an economic spiral that would cost us revenue too. In the long run -- and perhaps in the short term too -- raising taxes will make the deficit worse, not better."

. . . Gov. Jim Doyle, 2003

"Congress says they are looking into this Bernard Madoff scandal. How does this make sense: the guy who made \$50 Billion disappear is being investigated by people who made \$750 Billion disappear."

. . . From the internet.

Automobile Insurance Gets Worse in Conference Committee Budget.

Drivers from Northeast Wisconsin to Subsidize Milwaukee

Recently, the Senate passed a budget that was approved by a Conference Committee on a 17 to 15 vote with your senator, Dave Hansen voting in favor. A Conference Committee is a panel of legislators formed to iron out differences between the Senate and Assembly when they pass different budgets. The budget that came out of that committee raises taxes over \$2 billion, property taxes an additional \$1.5 billion, and increases government spending by nearly 7 percent. As well, there are non-fiscal policy provisions that changed in this budget compared to the Senate and Assembly versions, including those dealing with automobile insurance. This change is very important for Northeast Wisconsin drivers who, if it is enacted into law, will be paying higher insurance rates to subsidize high risk drivers in areas like Milwaukee.

In the Conference Committee budget Wisconsin automobile insurance policies would have the highest mandatory minimums in the nation and drivers would be required by law to hold insurance. This would force drivers to pay higher premiums in order to keep from breaking the law. The budget also included a hidden line that will force good drivers to subsidize higher risk drivers. In the Conference Committee bill, insurance providers would be banned from taking into consideration where an individual lives when they set premiums. In effect, this would force drivers from Oconto, Marinette, and Brown Counties to pay higher premiums to subsidize urban areas like Milwaukee where vehicle theft and collision are more prevalent.

If this provision passes, Wisconsin would be the only state in the nation to have a complete ban on the use of territorial ratings. A similar change was recently defeated in Connecticut and Michigan because of the added cost it would force on drivers. Under the changes in the original budget proposed by the Governor, insurance rates were expected to go up 33 to 43 percent for drivers in Wisconsin. With the Conference Committee addition, rates will go up even more and these added costs will disproportionately fall on Northeast Wisconsin drivers with clean driving records.

Current automobile insurance requirements in Wisconsin are sufficient to cover over 90 percent of all auto collision claims and without mandating automobile insurance, the percent of uninsured drivers in Wisconsin is in line with the national average. By increasing the cost of auto insurance the percentage of uninsured will surely rise.

The Conference Committee budget is expected to be voted on in the Assembly this evening. No amendments can be offered to a Conference Committee budget. If it passes the Assembly, it moves to the Governor for signing
State Rep. John Nygren.

No Tax Times for August.

As is our usual practice, we will not print a *TAX TIMES* for the month of August. Please note from the back page we will have our regular monthly meetings on July 16, and August 20. We will have speakers and are sure there will be plenty of items for us to discuss and act upon. Please plan on attending.
Jim Frink - BCTA

Things That Make Us Wonder.

WE ALL PAY FOR BANKRUPTCY.

We all have our thoughts on the financial problems of the U.S. automakers, and question the governments wisdom with the use of our money. GM already has some big time obligations.

Their 12th largest creditor is Johnson Controls of Milwaukee who GM owes almost \$33 Million. They already owe one bank over \$22 Billion and the UAW employee obligation of \$20+ Billion. These will all have to be negotiated in bankruptcy court.

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WHY WAS THIS A BUDGET ITEM?

If the proposal in the state budget to issue special car to illegal citizens becomes law, we will become only the second state to do so. While there may be some justification in doing this, the public hasn't had much opportunity to weigh in on the issue.

Also, we haven't seen where the ability to speak or read English will even be a prerequisite. Offhand, it appears this whole idea could create more problems than it will solve.

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WHY YOU NEED AN ATTORNEY.

An example of why people don't run for public office. A citizen brought a successful lawsuit against the Weyauwega-Fremont school board for violating the states open meeting laws. Something that all public officials have to be careful about. Problem is the plaintiff wants the board members to pay his \$20,000 legal fees out of their pockets.

We certainly aren't advocating that taxpayers should be responsible for all legal fees encountered by elected officials, right or wrong, and acknowledge that at times lawsuits are in order. It is why you need your own attorney checking over everything you do.

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THE COST OF STRICTER DWI LAWS.

Horrible accidents attributed to the use of alcohol have brought calls for much stiffer penalties for all drivers convicted of DWI.

Problem is that if more people are brought to court, the present legal system would have trouble keeping up and the cost to taxpayers would be in the millions.

Wisconsin attorneys probably look forward to tougher laws, however.

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A CHANGE FOR THE BETTER?

One of the reasons given for the Democratic takeover of the Wisconsin Legislature last year was that people didn't like the way it was being run and they wanted change. Perhaps so

So far the most notable change has been secret sessions, late night deals, laws established by decree under the guise of policy change with little opportunity for debate and more pork spending than ever thought possible.

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UW KEEPS ON SPENDING.

While the rest of the state cuts back on spending proposals, the UW system keeps on planning and spending money for new building projects. Pending last minute cuts, the Legislature's Joint Finance Committee had approved 36 new major building projects including residence halls and academic buildings throughout the state totaling \$886 million to be paid by taxpayers, student fees and other sources.

We realize that education and the UW system get top priority for state spending. It still would make sense to hold off on a few things until the economy improves.

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OBAMA ANNOUNCES "PAYGO" PLAN.

A June 10, *New York Times* article related that President Obama, receiving criticism for the estimated \$1.8 trillion deficit caused by this years federal budget has proposed a "pay-as-you-go" law to ensure that funds for federal spending either be from available funds or a reduction in other spending.

This would be called "Paygo", but would not apply to "discretionary" spending that finances most government programs or programs such as Medicare and Social Security. It sure sounds nice.

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A PLAN FOR MISCHIEF?

Congress has approved to give vouchers worth \$3,500-\$4,500 to owners of "gas-guzzler" vehicles towards the purchase of more efficient transportation. The idea is to create demand for the auto industry and encourage the use of more fuel efficient vehicles.

The exact details of the plan, or

why taxpayers should pay for something like this have yet to be announced.

Whatever conditions and restrictions Congress comes up with, you can be assured that auto dealers and anyone who wants a new car for any reason will figure out a way to beat the system.

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THE REST OF THE STORY.

The Legislature's speaker Rep. Tom Nelson made an appearance on Green Bay television on June 21, defending the proposed state budget by claiming there were no increases in income or sales taxes which would impact the average Wisconsin taxpayer.

He did neglect to mention the myriad of special fees and charges which the new budget imposes, or the fact that the reduction of state aids to schools and municipalities which is estimated to add at least \$350 property taxes to the average homeowner.

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AN EXPERT OPINION.

For the most part, the City of Chicago has never had a reputation for ethical politics. When a newspaper from Chicago criticizes someone else's politics, you can probably take it as a compliment.

A June 14, article in the *Chicago Tribune* regarding the Wisconsin budget process told of the following. Public hearings which lasted for three minutes before the doors were closed. Most of the work on the \$62.2 Billion budget was done in secret. Hearings for the public not being announced. Changes and additions being added with no public announcement. Many meetings were held at night and not available to the public. There was no conversation or compromise on most items.

The list went on and on with specific examples of our budget process.

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THIS IS ELECTION REFORM?

There seems to be no question that voting procedures in much of the U.S, need some changes to #1-Keep campaign financing clean and honest, #2-Keep the polling places honest and accurate, and #3-Encourage people to get out and vote as being both a privilege and an obligation of U.S. citizenship.

Most of the reforms proposed so far seem designed to ultimately favor one political party over the other. The Govt

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Accountability Board which oversees elections in Wisconsin is spending \$17.3 Million as part of a five year to modernize voting procedures in the state.

So far some of their ideas include allowing early voting, allow absentee ballots to be returned by E-Mail or fax. Voting by phone or internet. Allowing a standing request for absentee ballots for all elections. Changing dates of primary elections to allow more time to prepare for the general elections.

Some of these ideas may have merit, but they could also open the door for more fraud. How many important elections have been disputed during the past several years while arguing over absentee or other questionable ballots. They still don't know who the Senator from Minnesota is going to be after 8 months.

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IS THIS A HIDDEN FEE OR WHAT?

Brown County will have to send the state an additional \$7.10 for every ton of waste material it dumps, an increase of 120%. This has nothing to do with the cost municipalities pay to collect and haul waste material which will likely also increase. This additional cost will be incorporated into your property tax bills.

While this will cost us, the real reason for the fee increase seems to be for bordering states that dump millions of tons of their trash each year in our landfills because our tipping rates have been less.

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FINANCE REFORM IN ACTION.

In February the assembly passed a rule banning fundraising events for reelection while budget negotiations were in progress. Good idea they said, because it would eliminate contributions that might influence items in the budget.

Apparently the \$1,000 per head Democratic party golf outing held June 15, and attended by many legislators didn't count because the law hadn't passed yet.

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ARE WE "CREATING" A CRISIS?

Claiming 46 million Americans are without health insurance, President Obama is calling for urgent reform measures with an initial estimated cost of \$1.5 Trillion. While this may sound catastrophic, the numbers may be misleading.

For example, millions do not carry insurance as a matter of choice, even though they could afford. Millions have

access to "health care" but not health insurance. It is estimated that no matter what the government does there will still millions of people who are not covered.

While we acknowledge this is a problem and people are concerned. Pres. Obama claims he wants a plan designed to reduce costs. One good way to start would be to get accurate numbers of who is and who isn't covered would be a good start and then sit down and determine exactly why health care is so expensive in the first place. Put accurate and believable facts on the table before trying to stuff something down our throats through the use of government SWAG (*Scientific Wild Ass Guess*) mathematics,

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A LOSE, LOSE SITUATION.

When the six communities forming the Central Brown County Water Authority couldn't reach agreement with the City of Green Bay and opted to construct it's own pipeline to Manitowoc, one result was a more than doubling of consumer water and sewage rates. While we commend the authority for providing a safe and ample source of potable water, it is still a major household expense.

Due to the cost, many consumers responded by reducing their consumption. Less water on the lawn.

We now read that due to decreased usage, the water authority may have to raise its rates to pay off it's debt.

In other words, if you use a lot of water you paid more, and if you don't use a lot of water you still pay more. The same principle seems to apply to our other utility bills.

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HOW MANY GALLONS IS A BILLION?

In a somewhat related story from the Journal-Sentinel it was disclosed that on June 19, almost a BILLION gallons of storm water and diluted but untreated raw sewage overflowed into Lake Michigan. Milwaukee has spent billions of dollars trying to correct this problem but it seems to happen whenever it rains.

Maybe it's not the reason our drinking water tastes funny every once in a while but the stuff has to go someplace.

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OF WOLVES AND SWANS.

Due mostly to complaints by farmers due to livestock loss the DNR is considering allowing limited hunting of

wolves. Just like deer, they claim to know exactly how many there are in the state.

In a related but less publicized item it is reported the DNR has a program to eradicate mute swans nesting along the bay shore and Lake Michigan. They are considered an "invasive species", doing damage to the shoreline and other wildlife. They are probably easier for the DNR to shoot than wolves also.

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OSHKOSH HAS A NOVEL IDEA.

The City of Oshkosh has started to remove all parking meters from the city. They discovered that the meters were underutilized and not even paying their share of parking utility costs. They will continue to use lots with reserved parking places and limited time street parking.

This might even be a good idea for Green Bay to consider.

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KEEPING US INFORMED.

We agree that open communication between our elected officials and their constituents is important. Unfortunately it can also be expensive to taxpayers.

Remember the criticism Rep. Toby Roth took because he sent out a newsletter outlining what was going on in Washington and explaining the impact.

Rep. Kagen sends a professionally prepared 4-color piece (*prepared and mailed at taxpayer expense*) to let us know he is working for us.

Perhaps this explains why the average house office expense is now \$1.5 million per year, or an increase of \$100,000 over last year.

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STATE DEBT "BALLOONING."

One of the problems with the state budget that may really haunt us in years to come is additional borrowing. It is estimated that in 2012 yearly payments on state debt will consume at least 4.5% of income from taxes and fees, or 13% more than anticipated. The more we borrow to balance the budget this year the harder it will be to balance the budget in the future.

This principle also applies to municipalities and school districts.

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WISCONSIN IS NOT ALONE.

Apparently Wisconsin is not alone in seeking new sources of revenue.

One reason is that many state

officials were not in office during the last recession, and really don't know how to deal with the problem of reduced income.

California has a \$24 Billion deficit, and plans are to close more than 200 state parks. The governor of Minnesota simply cut \$2.7 from the budgets of state agencies and will let them work things out for themselves. Illinois is saving \$15 Million a year by not paying for 10,000 funerals per year for the poor, and New Hampshire wants to sell 27 state parks.

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CONTROLLING LAKE LEVELS.

Last years Great Lakes compact was designed to preserve the Great Lakes and prevent diversion to other parts of the country. One problem addressed was the annual fluctuation of water levels, and what was causing it.

While global warming is suspected, it was also determined that dredging and erosion on the St. Claire River near Detroit which controls the flow of water from Lakes Huron and Michigan has lowered the lakes a total of 20 inches.

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MORE SUMMER EVENTS NEEDED?

The Brown County Stadium Board says it would like to schedule more events in June at the Stadium and claim it would help pay for the place.

There are probably ample events already in the area in June. The real problem is July, August and beyond when the Packers don't allow events due to their schedule. Another problem which we understand but makes it difficult to schedule and big events at that time is that the NFL schedule is not announced in ample time to schedule events around it.

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CHANGE THE BUDGET PROCESS!

There has been plenty of criticism of the procedure used to produce the state budget and there will be a lot more as all the secret and questionable clauses in the budget are finalized and clarified.

The *Wisconsin State Journal* published an article on "Six Ways to Save the Budget" which are worth considering.

#1 – Leave the Government Accountability Board alone. This is the watchdog agency over the Legislature and apparently they were left out of the procedure.

#2 – Remove all non-fiscal policy. These items should be handled aside from the budget as any other legislation is han-

dled and not hidden in the budget.

#3 – Pull out the pork. The finalized budget contains millions of dollars of pet projects for special interests.

#4 – Drop taxes on oil companies and capital gains. Not good ideas.

#5 – Ease impact on schools. Budget will cause more problems for schools and also raise property taxes.

#6 – Slice the next shortfall. Don't postpone items to the next budget. Things won't necessarily be better then either.

* * * * *

DOYLE VETOES SPENDING.

As we get ready to send this copy of the TAX TIMES to the printer, it was announced that Gov. Doyle had vetoed a total of 81 spending items from the state budget before he signed it.

These 81 vetoed items will save taxpayers a total of about \$10 million.

Considering the budget represents spending a total of \$62 Billion, his vetoes amount to 1/6,200 of the total.

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 current news events. We use reliable, published information and statistics. Some items are unimportant and probably not worth commenting about while others could easily be expanded to full length feature articles worthy of future study and action to protect our interests as taxpayers. We try to cover a wide variety of subjects in limited space and perhaps put a different spin on items from what you read in the papers or see on TV. We acknowledge that our perspective on some items in this column may be contrary to some of 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."

"Blessed are the young, for they shall inherit the national debt."
... Herbert Hoover

"Good judgment comes from experience, and a lot of that comes from bad judgment."
... Will Rogers

June Meeting Notes.

Monthly BCTA meeting held June 19, 2009, at Tiletown Brewing.

Discussion at this meeting focused on the Senate version of the state budget bill, passed late last night (June 17) by a narrow 17-16 margin. It increases spending by over 6 percent and raises millions of dollars in taxes and fees. We are getting \$2.1 billion in tax increases in this version of the budget. The Legislative Fiscal Bureau projects the General Fund Balance at the end of this budget to be only \$181,300, leaving no room for error.

The Senate's \$62 billion version of the budget is \$300 million larger than the Assembly's version. It fully taxes capital gains, eliminating both the current 60 percent exemption and the 40 percent exemption proposed by Gov. Doyle and supported by Assembly Democrats. This amounts to a huge \$485.6 million tax increase.

Governor Doyle's QEO repeal is back. The Senate budget restores Governor Doyle's original proposal to repeal the QEO effective on the date of the bill. The Joint Finance Committee and Assembly had set the repeal date at July 1, 2010, giving Wisconsin taxpayers a short reprieve.

The Senate budget directs additional public utility assessments for the Public Benefits Fund be used for salaries and fringe benefits for district attorneys rather than Wisconsin Works. The increase is \$18,279,400 over the biennium. This tax increase will actually be collected by Wisconsin utilities as part of monthly utility bills. The original purpose of the Public Benefits Fund was to pay for energy conservation, renewable energy development, and low-income energy assistance. It is now a source of funds to be siphoned off like the Transportation Fund.

Many non-fiscal policy items remain buried in the Senate budget. For example, local police departments will be required to collect racial data at every traffic stop.

One of the very few positives of the Senate budget is that the horrible idea of joint and several liability was taken out. At present, someone must be 51 percent or more liable to pay all damages in a lawsuit. In his budget, Governor Doyle reduced that to one percent, which would have effectively made any party in a lawsuit individually liable for 100 percent of the damages.

The next Brown County Taxpayers meeting is scheduled for July 18, 2009, Details on the last page of this *TAX TIMES*.

Dave Nelson – Secretary

The TAX TIMES

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

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The TAX TIMES - July-August, 2009

BCTA Meeting and Events Schedule – MARK YOUR CALENDARS.

Thursday - July 16, 2009. BCTA Monthly Meeting, 12:00 Noon.
Titletown Brewing Co., "Frost ROOM."
Program – Discussion of State Budget & Local budgets.

Thursday - August 20, 2009. BCTA Monthly Meeting, 12:00 Noon.
Titletown Brewing Co., "Frost ROOM."
(Note: There will be August TAX TIMES but we will still have our monthly meeting. Please plan on attending.)

Thursday - September 17, 2009. BCTA Monthly 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.

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.
(\$2.00 for beverage only without luncheon plate,)

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



"Wisconsin's problem is not that we tax too little, it's that we spend too much." . . . Gov. Jim Doyle, 2003

"It is difficult to make our material condition better by the best laws, but it is easy enough to ruin it by bad laws." . . . Theodore Roosevelt

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.