

Profligacy by the Dashboard Light .

"STOP RIGHT THERE! I gotta know right now, before we go any further, do you love me? Will you love me forever?" – Ellen Foley with Meatloaf, from "Paradise by the Dashboard Light"-sorry if that musical genre isn't yours, the words match what's playing right now. I am belting this line, right now, to a president who is trying to do the very same thing to us taxpayers. STOP RIGHT THERE!

Cash for Clunkers is broke, but they gave away another \$2 billion of our money for your neighbor's scrap metal before ending it. Drove by the Clunkers lined up at the Ford lot, some looked like some pretty nice wheels. Like Belushi belched in Animal House, "Have a beer – don't cost nuthin."

State unemployment insurance accounts are broke, but they are working to extend the once-26-week program from now-79 weeks to 94 weeks. They are working to extend the COBRA subsidy to help displaced workers pay exorbitant health insurance premiums until they find gainful employment with benefits. If the Almighty O had slipped a few million to his union buddies at Mercury Marine, they might have accepted the latest contract and kept hundreds of jobs in Fond du Lac.

Where is Gov. Doyle, cutting deals to build trains in Spain? I'm sure that one even pisses off the pontiff, my dear Lord, what is he thinking? That deal is one that no one in Wisconsin should forgive.

Republican governors in Connecticut, Arizona, California, Florida and Mississippi are moving tax hikes against intractable Democratic legislatures to balance long over-due budgets. "I have exhausted the (spending) cuts," declared Gov. Jodi Rell of Connecticut. Sacrilege! Infidel! There is always fat to cut. Maybe it's fat you've accepted and gotten comfortable with because it fits your slacks. But it's still fat. Steatopygia! Cut it!

And the "Stimulus" program. Don't get me started. It was supposed to STIMULATE, leverage private investment. Rep. Nick Milyoy, a Northwoods Democrat, knows it too: "The whole intent of the stimulus money is to try to make investments that encourage reinvestment by the private sector," he said. "It simply is not sustainable to have government keep putting up money if that doesn't happen."

And maybe it will kick in – eventually -- but can we wait?

Where are the jobs, Mr. President?! Where is the private investment? Government spending is the only rising sector of the economy. Job loss is slowing, and I suppose we can give some credit for that, but that ain't much. Look at the kind of jobs your stimulus is stimulating, according to the AP: "In Oregon, where lawmakers are spending \$176 million to supplement the federal stimulus, Democrats are taking credit for a remarkable feat: creating 3,236 new jobs in the program's first three months. But those jobs lasted on average only 35 hours, or about one workweek. After that, those workers were effectively back unemployed."

Are those 3,236 new jobs be part of your 3-4 million jobs "created or saved"? Yes they are. And how many more like it across America? Right now it's all about jobs, jobs and more jobs, not Healthcare, not Cap & Trade, jobs. Yet the conservatives continue to be railed on for saying no, but here is something we do "KNOW." Put some real incentive (code word for economic stimulation) for private companies to create jobs-here it comes- in the form of "tax cuts" that tried-and-true, more immediate method. It worked every other time it's been done, Kennedy, Reagan, Thatcher, and to some extent Bush, but even he indulged the spending.

I share Meatloaf's despair at the end of "Paradise." Let me re-cast the lyrics a bit and sing about how through I am with this presidency: "I'm prayin' for the end of term to hurry up and arrive, 'cause if I have to spend another minute with you, I don't think that I could really survive." We need to work with YOU, Mr. President, and you with the conservatives, not Harry and Nancy. We the People gave you a chance to deliver "change you can believe in." But I'm not holding my breath and I'm looking for a time machine.

"I'm prayin' for 2012, that's all that I can do, Do, DO! Prayin' for 2012, so I can end my time with you!"

Richard Parins, - President

The BROWN COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION
Promoting Fiscal Responsibility in Government

Wisconsin State Budget Recap.

STATE REPRESENTATIVE DON PRIDEMORE.

Editors Note: *The controversial negotiations leading to the signing of the state budget which became effective on July 1, of this year are now history. As with any 1,000 plus page document passed by the Legislature, this document contains many provisions, taxes and fees, policy changes and mandates which were not open to public discussion while the budget was being prepared. Although the full impact of this budget may not be fully felt or understood for some time, it appears that higher property taxes, reductions in public services, and a new level of state laws and mandates effecting our economy will result. Rep. Pridemore has done an admirable job of interpreting and condensing the budget.* **JF**

While most of the media is fixated on National Health Care (with no mention of how the government will socialize it, make it more expensive through excessive taxation and destroy the quality we all enjoy) I think it's important that the voters of Wisconsin remember what the legislature has done to us in the budget to make the recession here even worse.

While all of us struggle to maintain our household budgets under the threat of pay cuts, layoffs and even job loss, the Governor and his liberal spending comrades in Madison, have decided to use the budget process to payback all the special interest groups that helped get them elected. The democrat's mantra is "take it from those who earn it and give it to those who don't." And in the process of taking it, skim off a sizable portion for state government to expand and regulate even more of our daily lives.

At a time when revenues from income and sales taxes are down 7%, the state budget the democrats passed (without one vote from a republican in either house) increases overall spending by 6.2%. Even in the face of a freefalling economy the democrats continue to "tax and spend" the working people of Wisconsin out of their homes and their jobs.

Wouldn't it be great for your household budget to be able to spend more than you take in and force your neighbor's kids to pay off the difference? According to the Wisconsin Policy Research Institute, Wisconsin personal income growth ranked 47th from 2003 through 2008, yet the Governor continues his attacks on working families. Wakeup Governor! Wisconsin can no longer afford it!

This budget (including the budget repair bill passed earlier this year) raises taxes and fees by over 2 billion dollars and allows property taxes to increase another 1.5 billion dollars. Furthermore, Governor Doyle's budget borrows more than 3.5 billion dollars over the next two years, leaving our children and grandchildren to pay for his lack of fiscal responsibility.

As bad as this budget is, the next one will start out even worse. The budget the Legislature passed last month leaves a 2 billion dollar hole for the next biennium and that doesn't include the 2.2 billion dollars in federal stimulus money used for the sole purpose of filling in the budgets general fund shortfall.

Spending increases include extended benefits for welfare recipients and domestic partners. Badger Care, which originally provided health care for uninsured children, was expanded (Badger Care Plus) to include childless adults. The incentive to work hard and make good choices simply diminishes year after year.

Although the democrats love to blame the bad economy on past administrations, their actions will only deepen and prolong the recession on working families across the state.

Some of the tax and fee hikes include:

- * New Income Tax Bracket (Individuals earning \$150,000 and couples earning \$300,000 or more)
- * Capital Gains Tax Increase
- * Delay Deduction for Health Insurance Premiums
- * Delay Deduction for Child Care Expenses
- * Eliminate Tax Deduction for Domestic Production
- * Increase Corporate Income Tax (Throwback Sales)
- * Increase Cigarette Tax
- * Increase Tobacco Products Tax
- * Increase Hospital Tax
- * Apply the Hospital Tax to Ambulatory Surgery Centers
- * Increase Nursing Home Bed Tax
- * Delay Tax Credit for Conversion to Electronic Medical Records
- * Delay Tax Credit for Community Rehabilitation Program
- * Delay Biodiesel Fuel Production Tax Credit
- * Reduce Film Tax Credit
- * Increase Sales Tax on Businesses (Sales Tax Treatment of Disregarded Entities)
- * Delay Sales Tax Exemption for Alternative Energy Resources
- * Reduce Farmland Tax Credit
- * Create Police and Fire Protection Fee - A deceptively political name since the money is not paid to either police or fire departments. (Assessed on all phone lines.)
- * Increase Low-Income Assistance Fee (Assessed on all utility bills.)
- * Increase Work Permit Fee for Teenagers
- * Increase Child Care Licensing Fees
- * Increase Birth, Death and Marriage Certificate Fees
- * Increase Boat Registration Fee
- * Increase Handgun Record Check Fee
- * Increase Securities Trading Fees
- * Increase Increased Assisted Living Facilities Licensing Fees
- * Increase Insurance Agent Appointment Fees
- * Increase Bobcat Hunting Permit Fee
- * Increase Elk Hunting Permit Fee (Wisconsin does not have an elk hunting season.)
- * Increase Solid Waste Tipping (Garbage) Fee

The above partial list represents a range of fee and tax increases that taxpayers will be forced to pay at a time when people are losing their jobs and those who are working are experiencing cuts in wages and hours. These increases only go toward saving government jobs. The attack on small businesses, entrepreneurs and the private sector contained in this budget is relentless and quite frankly, insane. The added burden on senior citizens and others living on fixed incomes is unjustified and will force many to leave for tax friendlier states and take their retirement nest eggs with them.

Policy items included in the budget.

In past years, policy items have largely been left out of the budget. However, this year the democrats simply could not resist taking advantage of their majorities and proceeded to use the budget to pay back their friends. Below are some of the most egregious policy items passed by the democrats and signed into law by the Governor:

The QEO: The qualified economic offer allowed school boards to offer a yearly wage and benefit package increase of 3.8% to WEAC members without fear of strikes or arbitration. WEAC spent millions electing democrats in the last election cycle and this is their payback. Not only will many school boards be forced into arbitration, the new law does not force arbitrators to consider the local commu-

nity's economic circumstances in their decisions, leaving local taxpayers absolutely helpless.

New restrictions on school choice: Although study after study shows that schools in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP) have been providing parents in the city of Milwaukee a safe alternative at half the cost, democrats continue to do everything they can to destroy the program. The quality of education provided to the poorest of Milwaukee students who attend these schools, has been shown to equal or exceed that of MPS schools. So why would some democrats not support these schools? MPCP schools do not employ WEAC union teachers and MPCP schools offer competition that only points out MPS shortcomings and failures. Don't forget to follow the campaign money trail.

Domestic Partner benefits: Again, at a time when people are losing their jobs, the Governor and the democrats expand healthcare benefits for state workers at taxpayer's expense. The issue goes beyond same sex partner benefits. Many of these benefits will be given to opposite sex couples who don't mind registering but do not want the commitment of marriage. And by the way, the state will provide benefits to encourage your lifestyle and force taxpayers to pay for it.

The budget also includes a provision that would allow University of Wisconsin professors, their research assistants and academic support staff to unionize. At a time when many of us are helping our children pay the ever increasing costs of a college education, the Governor has rewarded his union friends and stuck it to struggling families across the state.

An additional gift to the unions is the prevailing wage provision that requires private businesses that participate in government construction projects to pay their employees union wages. This provision will not only drive up costs on construction projects, it will cause many projects to be canceled or delayed, further damaging our job market which is already reaching historic unemployment highs.

These polices are just a small sampling of the provisions passed by the democrats and signed into law by Governor Doyle. Not only do they not belong in the budget, all should have been debated in public and left to pass on their own merits.

Due to the budget's 2 billion dollar structural deficit and because it uses an additional 2.2 billion dollars in one time federal stimulus money to fund permanent state programs, the future prosperity we enjoy in Wisconsin has been severely jeopardized. This budget will further restrict job growth and economic activity. I predict that the continued erosion of the states economy due to the wrong direction this budget heads us into, will force yet another budget repair bill to be necessary. The continued downward spiral this governor is leading us into will only lead to even more socialist polices. Change! Yes, we need it desperately! TEA PARTIES are great but we need to turn that energy into voter turnout so we can return Wisconsin back to fiscal responsibility.

State Representative Don Pridemore.

"Wisconsin's problem is not that we tax too little, it's that we spend too much." "My mind will be open to every solution except one. We should not, we must not, and I will not raise taxes." "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

July Meeting Notes.

Monthly BCTA meeting July 16, 2009 at Titletown Brewing. Minutes of the previous meeting and treasurer's report were approved.

President Richard Parins reviewed his commentary from the Press-Gazette, responding to Rep. Tom Nelson's explanation in defense of the recently passed "balanced" state budget.

Richard was much more direct, pointing out the massive spending and fee and tax increases, while aids to cities, counties and municipalities are reduced. He also criticized the borrowing/bonding to balance the budget and the failure to eliminate the structural deficit in the budget. Elimination of the QEO and the addition of non-fiscal policy items in the budget were not addressed by the entire Legislature in open session and debated on their individual merits. He concluded by urging more BCTA members to make themselves heard.

It was noted that a number of area school districts appear to be laying the groundwork for referendums to exceed levy limits as a result of the new state budget. The state is reducing their aid to school districts on a formula basis as a result of the budget.

Treasurer Tom Sladek proposed a review of the BCTA's dues structure in light of increasing operational costs. We are proud that we have not had to increase the cost of membership during the 23 years the BCTA has been in existence. Tom will work with Jim Frink to work out a proposal to present to the directors and membership,

The next BCTA meeting is scheduled for August 20, and the speaker will be Warren Bluhm. **Dave Nelson – Secretary**

Advice From The Past.

The following was written in 1916 by William J. H. Boetcker, a German born religious leader and influential public speaker. This piece has often been credited to Abraham Lincoln, and it was my intent to title this article "Advice from Obama's idol" as President Obama has often been quoted as saying he was a fan of and admired President Lincoln. It was originally titled "*The Ten Cannots*" and is probably good advice for all politicians and individuals today.

JF

- *You cannot* bring about prosperity by discouraging thrift.
- *You cannot* strengthen the weak by weakening the strong.
- You cannot help little men by tearing down big men.
- *You cannot* lift the wage earner by pulling down the wage payer.
- *You cannot* help the poor by destroying the rich.
- *You cannot* establish sound security on borrowed money.
- *You cannot* further the brotherhood of man by inciting class hatred.
- *You cannot* keep out of trouble by spending more than you earn.
- *You cannot* build character and courage by destroying man's initiative and independence.
- *And you cannot* help men permanently by doing for them what they can and should do for themselves.

Amen.

National Debt Update.

At the end of August, the U. S. National Debt reached a total of **\$11,727,504,490,286.17**. As President might say, "So What." This is an increase of \$349,766,469,338.45 or about 350 Billion since the last time we reported at the end of June.

Your share of the debt has increased from \$37,126 to \$38,166 in that time, or an increase of \$1,040 that the government owes on you on your behalf. The interest alone is about \$308 Billion a year.

By comparison, the total of **all** private debt in the United States at this time is \$7,390,664,301,912. In other words, the federal government owes about 50% more in debt than all of the people, and other entities in the United States combined. That's not good.

There was a news item that the Chinese Govt. holds about \$800 Billion in U. S. Govt. Bonds, and are concerned about their value. Maybe should bail them out also.

There is a new website for tracking the National Debt as it happens. **Www.Usdebtclock.org**. Check it out. Not only does the estimated national debt keep changing as you watch, there are about 40 other items constantly updated such as population, medicare fraud, income and employment. It will keep you fascinated for hours. **JF**

Frustrated? Speak Out And Be Heard.

At a recent BCTA meeting there was an informal discussion as to what a person can do to be heard and express their opinions about the way our government is being run.

Letters to the editor is one way to express your opinion. The number of letters received on a subject is one way newspapers are able to gauge public opinion on a subject although sometimes it is obvious the letters are part of an organized writing campaign.

Calling your representative's office is another good way to be heard. Not that it will change their minds but they do keep track of what people are saying.

Running for public office yourself is a consideration, but obviously not for everyone. It takes money, organization and lots of support. If you can't run, support candidates who share your views with contributions and support.

Attend meetings or rallies and speak out. We certainly do not endorse disruptive or rude behavior, but giving support to a speaker or a cause is always helpful and appreciated. Get to know and speak with your elected officials whenever you have a chance. Most of them are ordinary people doing a job that they enjoy.

Lastly, join a taxpayer group and become active. **JF**

GOVERNMENT HEALTH CARE PLAN SIMPLIFIED. (Hypothetical)

Note: This frame contains a Hypothetical chart of the governments health care plan as it would likely be organized if approved.

We were unable to reproduce it for the electronic version of the TAX TIMES.

If you would like a copy, send us an E-Mail at BCTA@Execpc.com and we will gladly send you a copy.

From The internet.

Where are the Jobs?

Wisconsin's unemployment rate has jumped to 9.2 percent in June, just under the national average of 9.7. Oconto and Marinette Counties' unemployment rates were worse, 12.2 and 12.7 respectively according to the most recent data. Because of these dire numbers you would think our current leadership would be pushing policies that create jobs. Unfortunately, they have pushed through a budget that was described by an employer in Wisconsin like this, "They've sure given a lot of people the impetus to get the hell out of here."

Included in the state budget is an income tax increase that will impact 4,600 small business owners who file their taxes as personal income. As well, capital gains (personal and employer gains on investment) taxes were doubled and corporate taxes were increased by hundreds of millions of dollars. Taxes on your garbage and small business waste were raised to the highest levels in the nation. These changes don't exactly give incentives to employers to invest in Wisconsin. These budget changes actually do the opposite.

The effect of the tax and policy changes in the budget has been immediate and damaging. Harley Davidson cut 400 jobs earlier in the year and cited tax law changes (combined reporting passed into law by the governor and Democrats) as one of the reasons. These changes were estimated to cost Harley \$22.5 million. Briggs and Stratton recently announced they will be cutting 430 jobs in Wisconsin and moving them to Alabama and Georgia instead of moving Alabama or Georgia jobs to Wisconsin. This move is expected to save the company millions.

On top of these announcements, Mercury Marine of Fond du Lac has been discussing the possibility of moving 2,000 jobs to Oklahoma. The move will depend on how aggressive either state is at attracting Mercury Marine. Oklahoma has already stated they are doing everything possible to attract Mercury Marine. The Oklahoma legislature voted to forgive \$1.2 million in taxes owed by Mercury Marine and they're in negotiations to offer other incentives to move the Fond du Lac plant to Oklahoma. Considering Oklahoma is a right-to-work state and in the budget that just passed in Wisconsin Mercury Marine would be on the hook for additional taxes, I am not optimistic.

By rewarding special interests in the budget with billions in spending at the expense of private employers, the Wisconsin Democrats have given no reason for an employer to stay in Wisconsin if greener pastures are available. Companies invest in states they feel will partner with them and grow their investment. These investments create jobs - jobs that state residents desperately need.

We should be doing everything possible to hold the jobs we have, to provide for the unemployed through direct benefits and job training assistance, and giving employers looking for business friendly states during this economic downturn incentives to plant their roots here.

Until we do these things we will continue to lose jobs. At best, unemployment will begin to level off and stagnate. If this happens, revenues from private employers and working individuals will continue to drop and the schools and social services that depend on these revenues to operate will suffer.

Because of the actions taken in the budget passed by the Democrats this year, the next budget will have a deficit that will be just as bad if not worse than the \$7 billion we had earlier this year. The odds of \$2.2 billion in federal 'stimulus' money being available to plug budget holes in K-12, Medicaid, and local aids next budget cycle is not likely. Wisconsin is already operating under a \$2 billion structural deficit that will have to be closed in the next budget. That number will grow if Wisconsin continues to lag behind in economic growth.

Wisconsin is in a competition with 49 other states for job creation and retention. Based on the performance of our leadership this year we are losing that competition. There are jobs moving and being created during this recession in the United States. They are just in other states like Texas, Georgia, Oklahoma, and Alabama. Unfortunately, some of those jobs moved and were lost from right here in Wisconsin.

Rep. John Nygren

August Meeting Notes.

Warren Bluhm Speaks to BCTA

Monthly BCTA meeting Aug. 20, 2009 at Tiletown Brewing Co.

Warren Bluhm, Community Conversation Editor (Opinion Page Editor) for the Green Bay Press-Gazette, shared his observations about journalism and the print media.

Warren noted that between the print and online editions, 84 percent of area adults read the Press-Gazette. The Internet has not affected the Press-Gazette's circulation as much as it has affected newspaper circulation in other parts of the country. Warren writes one editorial daily, based upon the consensus of the paper's editorial board. There is a separation between News and Opinion. He explained that diverse editorials result from editors' diverse opinions. He offers guest columns for opposing views.

Warren focuses on diversity of opinions. In April, 2007, Walter Williams and Cynthia Tucker, conservative and liberal, respectively, became regulars on the Opinion Page. Later, the liberal Leonard Pitts and conservative George Will became Opinion Page regulars. Warren describes himself as a believer in liberty and limited government.

Rich Carlstedt called attention to Kay Christman's letter in the August 20 Press-Gazette explaining that the Enrollment Task Force neither proposed nor endorsed the proposal for a two-campus high school on the west side of Green Bay. Rich served as an active member of the Enrollment Task Force.

Members discussed the upcoming union vote at Mercury Marine in Fond du Lac. The union members will vote YES or NO to accepting management's requested contract revisions, which it says are necessary to avoid transferring production jobs to the company's Stillwater, Oklahoma plant.

Retaining the jobs in Wisconsin is made more difficult by the facts that Oklahoma is a right-to-work state and that Oklahoma does not have combined income tax reporting for multi-state corporations. Combined income tax reporting was recently enacted in Wisconsin to produce additional tax revenue, but it provides one more reason for multi-state businesses to consider relocating to friendlier states.

The next meeting of the Brown County Taxpayers Assn. is scheduled for Sept. 17, at Tiletown Brewing. The speaker will be John Zakowski, Brown County District Attorney. Details on back page of this TAX TIMES

Dave Nelson - Secretary

Getting Less For More.

There will be a lot of repercussions from the State Budget in coming months, and the worse is likely to arrive in your mailbox sometime about the middle of December. We are all well aware of the many new and increased fee increases imposed by the Governor in order "not to raise taxes." We are aware of the five billion dollar deficit, and the fact that the state has to borrow money at a high rate of interest just to pay their bills. Further complicating the deficit is that the state has reduced its traditional aids to local governments and school districts up to 15%. This makes local budgeting all that much more difficult.

In an effort to look good to the public, the state has been closing DNR and MVD offices throughout the state, asking state employees to take 2 weeks of unpaid leave, and even closing some of the busier state offices on certain days to the public to emphasize their sincerity. Nonetheless there has not been any real evidence of the state laying off workers or other cost cutting measures. In fact their payroll has grown and paying overtime to cover days off.

In the meantime, school districts, municipal and county governments have been struggling to find ways to budget their needs without the ability to increase property taxes to pay for them. It will be a real challenge this year and we appreciate the difficulties our local public servants are facing.

In the past year, we have seen municipal employee contracts re-worked, school district programs and staffs reduced, and capital spending projects are being set aside. Neighboring Manitowoc County has laid off about half of their maintenance staff. Property tax increases are not an acceptable solution with unemployment near 10% and families facing foreclosure on their residences. The usual property tax base increase local governments always depended on for tax revenue increases may not materialize due to lack of construction and depreciation of existing property values.

Who do we blame. Most of the services we expect and receive for our tax dollars come from our local governments. However, it is the state which sets the laws by which they operate. Also it is the state which has cut back on many of the financial aids and services due to their budget problems.

What will be the outcome? Our officials conducting budget hearings may have to learn how to say, "Sorry, we simply cannot afford that at this time." Cost cutting measures will have to be encouraged and implemented.

In the meantime, get used be paying higher taxes and receiving less for our money.

JF

"You may deceive all of the people part of the time, and part of the people all the time, but not all the people all the time." . . . **Abraham Lincoln**

"If you ever injected truth into politics, you have no politics." . . . **Will Rogers**

VISIT OUR WEBSITE
www.BCTAxpayers.Org
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We Simply Have More Problems Than Any Other Generation.

No one should ever make the claim that we are a selfish generation of Americans. We simply have more problems than any other generation.

We've certainly turned to government to try to fix more problems than any other generation. We can't say that government has fixed many of them, and some problems have definitely gotten worse. But to pay for government efforts, we've placed more taxes on our activities than any other generation. Federal tax levies are the highest they've ever been.

But that still isn't enough money to fix our problems. So, beyond federal tax revenues, we spend all of our excess Social Security "contributions." These are the trillions that have been paid into the system through the years that weren't immediately paid out to Social Security recipients. These trillions could have been saved, and placed in trust for our retirement years. Instead they have been spent, and will not be available for us in years to come. Because we have more problems than any other generation, we've left it to future Americans to pay our Social Security benefits when we retire.

This is similar to the Medicare burden we've left to our children. This medical care program has never been adequately funded by Medicare taxes. Promising benefits for which it cannot pay, Medicare takes money away from us through our private insurance too. But we've promised ourselves many more trillions in unfunded Medicare benefits in the future. We've left it to Americans who haven't been born yet to pay these benefits because we have more problems than any other generation.

Unfortunately that still won't fix our problems. So we run record trillion dollar-plus deficits, which are added each year to a skyrocketing national debt. Deficit spending this year will be used for various "bailout" and "stimulus" packages. But since we're simply creating enormous sums of money out of thin air already, we've decided that we will create vast amounts on top of that. Why worry about thrift when there are more problems, and more political and social programs to create? These programs have been sitting on the political back burner for years just waiting for an opening like this. We're deficit spending on a massive scale already, why not spend a whole lot more? Because we have more problems than any other generation we've decided to leave this staggering debt to our sons, daughters, and grandchildren.

In addition, our problems are so enormous that we must spend all the money we can get our hands on right away. There is no time to discuss the possible negative effects of our actions. For example, many economists point out that lower taxes would foster economic recovery. Higher taxes will stifle recovery. We don't have time for that kind of thinking. There isn't even time to discuss whether or not it may be government spending that caused our problems in the first place.

Our troubles are so overwhelming that there is no time to consider the limitations placed on government activities established in our country's legal founding document, the Constitution of the United States. Our difficulties are so great that we cannot make allowances for any liberty-minded malcontents in the future. They might not be so willing to foot the bill for our spending decisions today. Yes, we are essentially taxing Americans of the future without their consent or representation. Our founders and revolutionary ancestors believed it was tyrannical for King George to practice taxation without representation. It is one of the grievances that led to our rebellion against Great Britain. But that's not worth thinking about when placed next to the difficulties we have to deal with right now.

No, we are not a selfish generation. We've simply been saddled with more problems than any American generation to come before us. And plainly, we've been saddled with more problems than any generation that will ever come after us.

Scott Liddicoat

Another Stealth Law?

This years state budget contains many items inserted with little opportunity for public input or debate, and in some cases their purpose is questionable except as a reward to some special interest group.

One of these is a provision that all state contractors whose work is regulated under any state codes pay a \$100 fee to register the Dept. of Commerce Div. of Safety and Buildings. State codes in this case include public and commercial buildings, single and multiple family dwellings. Exceptions are established contractors who require a specific license to operate. There were no specifics as to size of business, either in number of employees or sales volume. In other words, just about anyone working in the construction trades who has not registered will now be required to do so. This would include single proprietorships or part-time handymen. As with all regulations non-compliance provides for fines and penalties.

Aside from collecting some more money for the State Treasury and keeping a few more people busy in Madison, we wonder what the urgent need was for this regulation at this time.

Yes, when you hire a person calling themselves a contractor to perform a job, it is nice to know they are registered with the state. However, with the exception of licensed trades such as plumbing, electrician, etc., there are no requirements that the applicant have any specific training or experience. It is up to them to qualify themselves to potential customers. There are many methods of recourse available if necessary.

The state has a reputation of making lists of registrants public information (for a fee if possible.) The budget also contains a provision that any stimulus or other public funds used for any construction project be performed at prevailing wages, which generally is another way of saying union workers. Union organizers are always on the prowl for names of non-union employers. The Dept. of Revenue is interested in finding unreported income from individuals operating as contractors. Lists of contractors are always in demand for materials and service suppliers. The law require that all contractors, either with one employee, part time, or whatever register.

Whatever the purpose, it appears to be another layer of bureaucracy to complicate our lives. **JF**

“Honesty may be the best policy, but it’s important to remember that apparently, by elimination, dishonesty is the second-best policy.” . . . **Abraham Lincoln**

“The Great Depression, like most other periods of severe unemployment, was produced by government mismanagement rather than by any inherent instability of the private economy.” . . . **Milton Friedman**

“The democracy will cease to exist when you take away from those who are willing to work and give to those who would not.” . . . **Thomas Jefferson**

A Better Way To Dispose Of Garbage?

The La Crosse Disposal System and Resource Recovery.

The disposal of garbage and waste has been a constant and expensive problem for Green Bay and Brown County, and is unlikely to get any better as landfills keep filling up, trucking fees keep increasing and the market for recycled products keeps diminishing. The large increase in tipping fees imposed by the recent state budget and ever increasing environmental regulations are also concerns.

One state community is using a system that actually makes money, completely disposes of waste without using landfills that will sit and rot forever, and is compatible with environmental concerns.

The City of LaCrosse uses a comprehensive system with a long-term commitment to supply waste to Xcel Energy for the production of refuse-derived fuel. The refuse-derived fuel is combined with wood waste and used as boiler fuel at Xcel's electrical generating plant on French Island in LaCrosse.

The Disposal System's history with resource recovery dates back to the mid-1980s when local leaders decided to reduce La Crosse's reliance on storing wastes in landfills while also generating electricity from a previously wasted resource. This use of wastes to generate electricity is far more effective than trying to utilize landfill gas to generate electricity

Here is how the process works:

- * Trucks containing municipal solid waste are weighed as they enter the plant. *See [www/cityoflacrosse.org](http://www.cityoflacrosse.org)*
- * Waste is dumped on a "tipping floor" for processing.
- * The waste is moved to a conveyor which takes it to the flail mill, where 45 hammers--weighing 35 pounds each and rotating at 800 RPM--tear open bags and contents.
- * The waste goes through a magnetic separator where metal materials are removed for recycling.
- * The waste is then put through a screen and a shredder. Air blows the light material into an RDF storage bin, and the heavy residue falls out and is sent to the landfill. About 80 percent of the waste (by volume) is turn into RDF.
- * "Blow lines" transport the RDF into two fluidized bed boilers, where it is mixed 50/50 with wood waste to produce superheated steam that powers the steam turbine and generator.
- * The resulting energy is transferred to electrical substations providing up to 20 percent of the La Crosse area energy needs.
- * Emissions from the plant are continuously monitored to meet street environmental compliance standards.
- * The plant operates 24 hours per day, 5 days per week.

One ton of waste utilized in a waste-to-energy facility reduces oil use by about 35 gallons or coal use by about .25 tons.

It is estimated that one ton of waste utilized in such a waste-to-energy facility rather than landfilled reduces greenhouse gas emissions by 1.2 tons of carbon dioxide equivalent.

This type of technology has been around for some time. Whether it would be practical for this area or cost efficient would have to be determined. We do know that the production of energy is becoming more expensive, availability of landfills is becoming a problem, are expensive to operate to prevent leakage, and in general are a terrible waste of real estate. This is something that should at least be considered for the future. Also might also save taxpayers some money.

Jim Frink – BCTA

Things That Make Us Wonder.

HOW MANY UNINSURED?

One of the questions to be answered as the health care debate continues is just how many people are there lacking health insurance coverage. We acknowledge a problem but just how accurate are the numbers given us?

One widely publicized number of uninsured is 45.7 million, based on 2007 U.S. Census Bureau estimates. However, it was also disclosed that some of this number only lacked coverage for part of a year due to job changes, etc.

It was further estimated that 26% of the number were eligible for some sort of public assistance but had declined it, and another 21% were illegal immigrants. About 20% have annual family incomes exceeding \$75,000. It was disclosed that about 40% were young people who did not feel a need for health insurance. Does this number include farm families?

While we probably all can agree that our health care system needs some fixing and equalization, is it something we have to rush in to? While it is obvious the above numbers raise questions, are we heading for a one plan fits all solution?

The words "insurance" and "reform" as used by health care proponents could turn out to be a very misleading and expensive for us all.

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BUSINESS AS USUAL.

Despite the Governor claiming a "bare bones" state budget, he still found a few million available for what at least 70 items which can only be described as earmarks, or "pork barrel" spending. This includes \$500,000 to repair the Oshkosh Opera House to \$46,000 for recycling bins in Wrightstown. While no doubt worthy projects the question is whether they deserve funding by state taxpayers and at this particular point in time.

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THE CHECK IS IN THE MAIL.

Since 1968 Wisconsin has had a reciprocity agreement with Minnesota to cover income taxes for people who work in one state but work in the other. Since about 25,000 more people from Wisconsin work in Minnesota than the other way around, Wisconsin owes Minnesota \$106

Million for wages their residents earned in Minnesota but reported on Wisconsin income tax returns.

However as of June 17, Wisconsin hadn't made their payment and the Governor of Minnesota was becoming concerned. In the future, the alternative for these workers may be to file two tax returns: one for the state in which they live and one where they work. You can't trust anybody these days.

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THE POWER OF ADVERTISING.

Recently there has been a series of TV ads crediting a praising Gov. Doyle for his health care plan.

In case you missed it, this was not sponsored by the people receiving benefits but by the Greater Wisconsin Committee which is a special interest group which supports Doyle and is trying to upgrade his sub-standard approval rating.

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PART OF THE BUDGET?

There are a lot of items hidden in the 692 page Wisconsin State Budget. One on page 482 allows issuing of Class B alcohol licenses by Indian tribes "encompassing not less than 60,000 or more than 70,000 acres" without state approval. This is unique in the state, and by coincidence only the Oneida Tribe of Indians qualifies.

Assembly speaker Tom Nelson said he had nothing to do with this provision in the budget even though the tribe's reservation is in his jurisdiction.

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A WAY TO SAVE MONEY.

Milwaukee County executive Scott Walker has proposed dismantling the counties government. The reason being streamlining government operations on all levels and tremendous cost savings through elimination of duplication of functions.

While this may sound radical it may be something to think about if present trends continue. Between counties, cities, towns, villages and school districts Wisconsin has one of the highest number of governmental units in the nation. Each has its own budget and areas of responsibility.

Although the idea was not supported by city officials concerned with their authority, the biggest savings

could be in counties like Milwaukee where one city dominates. Also true in Brown County.

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STIMULUS MONEY IN ACTION.

There are a lot of questions regarding the Federal Government stimulus plan, not the least of which how and be whom it will be paid for.

Assuming that unemployment is approaching 10%, it would seem that creating jobs would be the #1 concern.

However just about all states have massive budget problems and creative governors who manage to divert federal dollars for whatever reason intended by Congress towards their own deficits rather than creating jobs.

Also, spending money on infrastructure projects may be welcomed by all of us but probably goes more to workers who already have jobs such as construction but does little for the clerical, factory and retail workers who find themselves suddenly unemployed with few benefits.

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MAYBE WE'RE BETTER OFF.

While some Federal Stimulus money finds its way to Wisconsin, and the state keeps looking for more federal money to cover our deficit, the fact remains that Wisconsin is at the bottom of the ladder as far as Uncle Sam is concerned.

A recent census report indicates that in 2008 Wisconsin ranked 48th per capita in federal funds spend at \$7,132 Per against the national average of \$9,184 for each person living in the United States.

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ANOTHER UNFUNDED MANDATE?

As if our police officers don't have enough to keep them busy, the new budget allows them to stop motorists for not wearing seat belts.

While use of seat belts probably has reduced injuries and fatalities, and better enforcement is necessary, it would seem that if individual safety is such a concern with the Legislature, helmets for motorcyclists and use of cell phones while driving should also be looked at.

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HELPING THE UNEMPLOYED?

Is raising the minimum wage from \$6.55 to \$7.25 per hour when unemployment is at 9.5% a good idea? Congress

apparently thinks so. It doesn't really matter much if you don't have a job.

While we certainly acknowledge \$7.25 is insufficient to support a family these days, most of the people who are losing their jobs for various reasons are already earning several times that amount.

If raising the minimum wage ends up solving our unemployment problem, we congratulate Congress for their wisdom.

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REINVENTING THE WHEEL.

The Wisconsin Government Accountability Board (GAB) is looking for ways to install an early voting system to supplement the absentee ballot for those who can't or don't want to come to the polls on election days. These could be handled differently than absentee ballots which are kept in sealed envelopes until all other votes have been cast and counted.

Bad idea. If any amount of votes were cast early, can we trust officials to keep the results secret and not muddy up the results. Things are bad enough now.

What happened in Minnesota recently effects all of us. A *Wall Street Journal* article reported that Al Franken was awarded the U.S. Senate seat only after 6 months of wrangling over the legality of disputed ballots even though he trailed by 725 votes in November. Do we want teams of lawyers deciding the outcome of our elections.

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A RAILROAD TO NOWHERE.

Gov. Doyle is all hot about building a high speed rail line between Milwaukee and Madison. Might even build a line to Green Bay if he gets re-elected. He claims it can be built for only \$500 million, and the federal govt. will even contribute to the cost. He even went ahead and ordered a couple of trains from Spain for \$47.1 million without approval. He said we can make more trains in Wisconsin and sell them to other states. So what if will probably cost several times that much even if people end up using it.

The *New York Times* has reported that so far not one single high-speed rail line in the U. S. has even broken even, let alone make a profit. There are probably a lot more reasons to declare this is a bad rather than a good idea. Especially when the state is already \$5 Billion plus in the hole.

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WHAT IS, "THE RIGHT TO PRIVACY?"

The state and federal governments keep making a big deal out of an individuals right to privacy, and some of the laws enforcing this can be frustrating to us like when visiting a doctors office.

For years these governments have sold lists of license holders, car buyers, social security recipients and telemarketers to private buyers using the excuse they "doing the public a favor" when they were only bringing in extra income for their departments.

In 2000 a state law was passed allowing people to "opt out" of being on these lists. Oddly enough, however, these lists are also available to the public.

Maybe if the state didn't have people compiling and selling these lists they could save us all some money and respect our right to privacy.

Open record laws are one thing and openly selling confidential information furnished in good faith is something else.

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LAWYER VS. LAWYER.

While we realize access to government records is absolutely necessary. It can also be frustrating when working with the various levels of government.

A report in the *Madison Capitol Times*, which we would assume to be cozy with the Governors office, claims they have filed a lawsuit against Gov. Doyle requesting information including questionnaires regarding finalists for a Dane County judicial opening. The suit claims that information was not furnished in a timely manner has required by law.

We have to keep all of those Madison lawyers busy.

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STRETCHING THE TRUTH?

At this point in time it is difficult to speculate how President Obama's health care plan will play out except to assume perhaps that proponents will stop at nothing to stuff something down our throats regardless of implications or cost.

There have been a number of reports that one of the strategies to be used will be to make the insurance companies the villains, blaming them for the high cost of health care and getting rich in the process. We realize that one of the driving forces behind the call for government run health care is the high cost and availability of insurance, but is this really the problem or the victim?

The government's message will be that the government can do much better, sort of like Medicare and Medicaid.

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BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD.

You can't blame people for trying. Earlier this year Minnesota and Wisconsin announced a plan whereby the two states would share certain services such as software, purchasing, etc. It was supposed to save each state about \$10 Million a year.

An article in the *Chicago Tribune* reported that after 4 months Wisconsin estimated it had saved a grand total of \$74,313 and the plan was being reworked.

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UW UNIONIZING UPDATE.

The provision in the new state budget allowing UW faculty and staff to become unionized apparently has even made UW officials uneasy.

According to an article in the *Journal Sentinel*, a number of unions have made a push for representation and the UW administration has cautioned against any "inappropriate" contracts not in the interests of the university system.

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POST OFFICE STILL LOSING MONEY.

Despite almost annual increases in the price of postage, the postal service continues to run up huge deficits. While much of this can be attributed to competition and loss of business from economic conditions, a lot may be caused by ancient and archaic rules governed by Congress.

Examples are the insistence that mail be delivered six days a week, while this is basically a five work day a week country. PO boxes are available for those desiring 6 or even 7 day service. Newspapers, magazines, and non-profit organizations receive all kinds of expensive incentives while price increases fall on individuals and businesses.

Perhaps if Congress wasn't allowed "Franking Privileges" which allows them to print and send mail free of charge to all of their constituents they would appreciate the problem more.

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EVERY CENT COUNTS SAYS OBAMA.

Who says President Obama is careless with the country's money?

It has been disclosed that when CEO's of major corporations visit the White House, official business or not, they are asked for their credit cards so that they



may be charged for their meals.

Which brings up the subject, did Green Bay and Brown County ever get reimbursed for expenses subsidized by taxpayers when the President visited us to campaign or promote his health plan?

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SAVING MONEY OR LIVES?

Earlier this year, in order to save the state some money, the DOT ordered all county highway to mow state and national shoulders and medians only once a year. Apparently counties are reimbursed by the state for this service.

Only problem is highways became unsightly and motorists vision was blocked by the tall grass and weeds. Several counties complained and now mowing is allowed 300 ft. from crossovers and intersections.

The question is if the savings from the reduction in mowing is worthwhile or if people will accept even higher taxes to get the service restored. The same goes for all of the other service cuts made by the state.

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TRUST US WITH YOUR MONEY.

Like parents robbing their children's piggy banks for household use, the state is uncovering any spare funds they can find and diverting them for other purposes. This even applies to the UW system.

The *Capitol Times* reported that \$23 Million was transferred from segregated funds maintained at various campuses designated for health services, recreational sports, student fees, etc., and transferred to cover financial aid grants including the program protecting families with less than \$60,000 of income from paying tuition increases.

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DOES THIS REALLY WORK?

The State of Wisconsin has given a lot of publicity to its plan requiring most state employees to take a few days off without pay to help reduce expenses.

In the meantime, the Legislative Fiscal Bureau reports that the 2009-11 budget just passed increases the number of full-time state employees by 263 over the previous year. While most of these are for corrections and health services it suggests that some agencies may be over-staffed if they are able to operate with reduced staffs for periods of time.

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TO PROTECT OUR BORDERS.

North Korea may be out of step with the rest of world but they do protect their borders. We'll never see the former President of Mexico come to the United States to negotiate the return of a couple of citizens who enter illegally.

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CASH FOR CLUNKERS RECAP.

While the overall value of the "Cash for Clunkers" program is being debated. the people who dreamed up the plan may have forgotten about trying to help the American auto industry. Especially considering the American people now have a financial interest in the future of GM and Chrysler.

So far the top sellers taking advantage of the clunkers plan have been cars made by Ford, Toyota, and Honda.

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REPAIR OR REPLACE?

The 35 year old Hoan Bridge in Milwaukee is badly in need of repairs to the point where it may be less expensive to demolish it and replace it with a ground level bridge. It was built with virtually the same set of plans as the Frigo Bridge.

The cost of painting such structures is prohibitive as it must be enclosed to prevent paint from dripping into the water or escaping into the atmosphere because of environmental laws.

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DOMESTIC PARTNERS.

Despite all the publicity and anticipation, the number of same-sex couples who registered as domestic partners during the first week it was permitted was less than anticipated. We haven't noticed if these registrations are listed in the paper the same as marriage licenses.

In the meantime there are court challenges questioning the legality of the law which was imposed through the state budget, as well as legal questions regarding the 2006 referendum defining marriage as a union between one man and one woman.

"The nine most terrifying words in the English language are, 'I'm from the government and I'm here to help'" . . . Ronald Reagan

"However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results." . . . Winston Churchill

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CONTROLLING EXECUTIVE PAY?

Most of us seem to agree that there is no justification in giving million dollar bonuses to executives of companies after receiving billions of dollars of federal bailout money.

Now Treas. Sec. Geithner is proposing legislation limiting corporate bonuses and giving shareholders of publicly help companies a vote on executive compensation packages. Good luck.

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GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT UP.

The U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported at the end of July there were 116,000 more federal and 24,000 more state and local employees than a year ago at this time.

No doubt many of them are kept busy counting and preparing statistics on the number of people in the private sector who are unemployed.

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WRITING OFF CREDIT CARD DEBT.

It is reported that Congress is considering regulation of the fees that credit card companies charge retailers for the use of their services. Also of the excessive interest and late fee charges assessed to card users.

At the same time they propose making it easier for forgiveness of credit card debt. One problem is that credit cards eliminate the responsibility of retailers maintaining accounts receivable or bad debt losses. Once a credit card sale is made it is the responsibility of the credit card company for collection or absorbing a loss. Congress could probably learn a lot about finance from them.

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THE COST OF COMPLIANCE.

The *National Taxpayers Union* reports that it costs the countries individuals and business about \$300 Billion yearly to comply with Federal income tax laws. This is the equivalent of 3.7 million people working 40 hour weeks the year round without taking time for vacations.

Despite attempts at "simplification," the individuals 1040 comes with 161 pages of instructions, triple the number it was in 1985.

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WHO'S RESPONSIBLE?

All over the country members of

Congress have been met with noisy protests at "town hall meetings" intended to tout the Presidents health insurance plan. For lack of a better scapegoat they blame the insurance companies for organizing opposition to their plan.

This is difficult to understand as while they blame the insurance companies for the cost they don't mention the additional cost to all of us if the government manages to get involved.

If insurance companies can be compromised, who will all of the trial lawyers whose contributions helped elect our present state and national leaders be able to sue for their clients?

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LOBBYING FOR THE PEOPLE?

There have been reports of unprecedented numbers of lobbyists working their trade in Congress in recent months on behalf of their clients with something to gain from health care legislation.

While there are some very fine groups protecting the interest of taxpayers, you can be sure the vast majority of these lobbying interests are trying to position their sponsors to profit from whatever legislation is approved.

We have read that various groups with deep pockets and interest in health care such as hospitals, medical professionals, pharmaceutical companies and insurers have been very active and have gained concessions to be included in the final plans. Money talks.

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247,000 LOSING JOBS IS GOOD NEWS?

The Bureau of Labor Statistics gleefully reported that ONLY 247,000 people lost their jobs in July, the lowest monthly total so far this year.

While they took this as a sign the economy is improving, it could also be an indication there are not many people left to still lose their jobs.

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URINE OR YOU'RE OUT.

This idea has been around the internet for awhile, and we acknowledge it would be politically difficult to enforce.

The story is that many occupations such as public safety, transportation, healthcare, etc., require a drug test as a condition of employment.

The question is if people have to take drug tests that prove negative in order to get a job and earn money,

shouldn't the people who receive welfare payments from the taxes paid by the employed also be required to take drug tests. This could be a step in reducing some of the country's drug related problems and possibly reduce welfare spending.

In other words, if you receive public money and can afford drugs, you shouldn't be eligible for public money.

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STATE TAX COLLECTIONS DOWN.

One of the things complicating the state budget this year was that fiscal year tax collections were 7.0%, or \$11.2 Billion less than the previous year. Corporate income taxes were down 21.7%, Individual income down 8.0% and sales tax down 3.8%. These are all dependent on the economy for improvement.

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BUSINESS IN WISCONSIN 101.

A bill backed by labor unions has been introduced in the Wisconsin Legislature s requiring public schools to teach the history of organized labor and the collective bargaining process.

Great idea. However we would like to suggest the curriculum includes chapters on the economy, creating and retaining jobs, business management, and factors involved in starting and growing a business such as making sufficient income enough profit to pay taxes, labor, buildings and equipment, interest and payments on your investment.

Also perhaps a few words on the desire to make a profit for yourself and other investors for the risk they have taken in order to provide a service offering employment to others. .

It might also be helpful to include a chapter on why business establishments locate in certain parts of the country rather than others, and why they sometimes pack up and move to other states when times get tough.

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CONSULTING OR INSULTING?

In 2008 the UW system spent \$28.4 million on software to develop a payroll system which didn't work.

They hired another consulting firm and paid \$200,000 per to 4 of their employees for five months work while 10 employees received \$100,000 each. The

bills keep coming in with no end is sight.

The ironic part is that UW employees who work with these consultants had a 2% raise rescinded and will have to take 8 days furlough this year. Whoever hired the consultants should be fired.

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FLUNKING THE ECONOMIC TEST.

The Wisconsin Policy Research Institute reports that from 2003-2008 Wisconsin ranked #47 in the country for personal income growth. Personal income ranks at 85.6% of the national average.

In other words, there is plenty of room for improvement.

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DO WHAT I SAY, NOT WHAT I DO.

We give the President credit for at least giving lip service to energy conservation and controlling government spending.

The story is that he recently took his wife to New York for dinner and a Broadway show. The media reported the cost as \$24,000, and we certainly don't deny him the need for security and other perks associated with being President.

However, the cost may have been somewhat higher. The entourage included 44 marines and 20 secret service personal for security plus the airplane crews which had to be accommodated, plus a number of automobiles, helicopters and other aircraft. One estimate over the internet put the cost to taxpayers to somewhat over a million. In private industry, this could possibly be taxable as personal income.

Maybe the \$24,000 was only for the show tickets and dinner.

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THE HIGH COST OF PRISONS.

In 1998 the City of Stanley, WI and private investors started construction of a 43 acre prison complex with the intention of providing employment in the area. The agreement was that upon completion the state would buy the prison, which they did in 2000 for a cost of \$82 million.

Trouble is it was not the best designed or constructed facility, and so far the state has spent \$20 Million on repairs and updates and more work is still required. The state has too much money in the project to start all over.

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PROPERTY VALUES STABLE?

An article in the *Journal/Sentinel* reports that the Department of Revenue reports Wisconsin property values

dropped by 0.5% last year. They say this was only the second time in 50 years that overall property values have declined.

This report must have been prepared for the benefit of local property assessors rather than individuals trying to sell their property.

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STIMULUS OR MORE PORK?

Taxpayers for Common Sense, a group that tracks Congressional earmark spending reports has concluded the pork spending is up in 2009 over 2008.

Despite President Obama's pledge to keep stimulus money free of earmark spending, it seems that a lot of the trickle down effect is going for pet projects rather than job creation. Agree?

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THE STATE SAVES MONEY?

Gov. Doyle's idea of having all state employees take 16 days of unpaid leave during the year probably sounded like a more practical way to save than it is.

For example, when state employees take their generous annual vacations, do they all take off at once or do they fill in for each other and even work a little harder if necessary, the same as private industry?

No, they close their whole department down and deprive taxpayers of their services such as with the DOT or Job Service offices which people rely on.

Is this the only they could take their days off? Are they always so busy they are all always indispensable, or are they only making a case for even more taxes and spending?

There have been reports of some DMV employees putting in overtime to make up for the extra work. We acknowledge that the vast majority of state employees are qualified, dedicated and industrious, but politics is still politics.

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SHOW ME THE CASH FIRST.

While the cars for dunks has been a popular giveaway program it isn't clear yet who the winners are. While dealers have made almost 400,000 sales so far as a result, they are reluctant to make delivery until they receive reimbursement from the government.

As a result we heard the gov't. in turn has had to hire an extra 1,000 people to do the paperwork so what will happen to them when the program ends.

Just a thought, if you pay \$4,500 a year in Federal taxes do you believe giving it

to someone to buy themselves a new car is the best use for your money?

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FAIR PAY FOR TEACHERS?

An Aug. 17, article in the *Journal/Sentinel* discussed the status of paying public school teachers in Wisconsin on the basis of their performance. Presently most teachers in the state are paid on the basis of their education, and number of years as a teacher.

While many people seem to think that incentives for student achievement and graduation rates should be considered there are other problems such as variables in student backgrounds between one school district and the next. Differences in achievement scores underline this.

In the meantime WEAC seems to favor extra training to gain extra skills and knowledge over student test scores.

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ELIMINATE THE WASTE FIRST.

While President Obama proclaims that elimination of waste and new taxes on "the rich" will be sufficient to pay for whatever it costs to implement his healthcare plan, government oversight and management of Medicare and Medicaid should prove otherwise.

The Heritage Foundation estimates that at least \$100 Billion as a conservative figure is wasted each year by these programs through fraud and abuse.

Present proposals in Congress do nothing to effectively combat fraud. It was pointed out that the credit card industry, with 700 million credit cards and over \$2 trillion annually in transactions has a fraud rate of less than 1/10 of one percent, which means the fraud rate in Medicare and Medicaid at least 100 times higher.

Maybe we should let Mastercard and Visa run the programs.

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THE STATE PATROL COMPLIES.

One state agency seems to be making a serious effort to reduce expenses. They have ordered their troopers to reduce their daily mileage by 19 percent and have still been able to provide necessary services.

They also are taking their unpaid furloughs at times the public safety will be least effected rather than locking the doors for a day as other agencies have done.

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SCHOOL BUDGET PROBLEMS.

One of the things that will likely complicate school districts from preparing their 2010 budgets is fluctuations in the amount of state aid received over that of previous years.

A recent Post-Crescent article listing area school districts indicated some districts would receive increases while others would have decreases as much as 15%. There are a number of factors used by the state such as enrollment and local property values.

However regardless of the states formula method most school already have made sharp budget cuts in recent years and raising property taxes is not always an acceptable option.

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SELL THE STATE CAPITOL?

Wisconsin is not the only state with budget problems. While the Doyle administration has been most creative in juggling funds and postponing liabilities, other states have come up with ideas.

For example, Arizona is seriously considering the sale of its Capitol building to private investors for \$735 Million. They would then lease it back with sizable annual payments. Not a popular since the building is already paid for.

Earlier this year the City of Chicago sold all of its parking meters to a private firm in exchange for the parking proceeds. So far there have been complaints that the meters have not been maintained, or for that matter emptied out regularly.

Motorists have been unable to put coins in the meters because they were full but were receiving parking tickets anyway.

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STILL NO TO A COUNTY SALES TAX.

The Fox River Valley and lake-shore districts of Wisconsin have been able to avoid having to impose the optional .5% Wisconsin county sales tax. So far there has been little enthusiasm by the county boards in the area to consider it.

All along the argument has been that additional tax revenues only leads to greater discretionary spending and this has proven the case in the counties that have it.

While this is still a valid argument many negative factors will make next years municipal and county budget a real challenge.

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FEDERAL CENSUS NEXT YEAR.

The Federal Government is gearing up for the 2010 census. In the meantime immigration reform will likely be a hot item in Congress.

Several states stand to lose or gain Congressional seats as a result of the census. Local population figures are used to calculate state and federal aids among other items. How accurate the results of the census have been is always a matter of speculation. This year will be more important than ever.

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PRISON OVERCROWDING.

Prisons in Wisconsin (and other states) are overcrowded and getting worse. While much of the blame falls on stricter sentencing laws, drugs and other felony items contribute. Early release to create space has not been a popular solution.

One problem, which may or not be a factor is that every new law which goes on the books calls for fines and penalties for non-compliance. We read of a prisoner in California with a life sentence for a \$2.50 pair of socks. His third offense, the first two were for minor felonies when he was 19 years old.

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WILL FANNIE AND FREDDIE PAY UP?

Recall last fall the urgency to give \$85 Billion to Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac to bolster the housing market. This was the first of a number of handouts of federal money which ultimately included banks, insurance companies, auto makers and whoever showed up at the U. S. Treasury with their hand out.

While much of these funds have already been repaid or will be, the director of the Federal Housing Finance Agency which regulates Fannie and Freddie said it would be difficult for them to make payment.. Considering the haste in which all of these bailout payments were made there have been questions as to oversight provided by the government.

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DOYLE'S DILEMMA.

Now that Gov. Doyle has decided not to seek re-election, he has to decide what to do with \$2,048,487 he has accumulated from supporters to campaign.

An article in the *Wisconsin State Journal* says he has three options. Return it all to the people who gave it to him, give it to charity or set up a foundation which cannot be political in nature, or give it to the political can-

didates or party of his choice, subject to limitations set by law.

If you were Governor Doyle, what would you do?

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VEHICLE REGISTRATIONS DOWN.

As if the Governor taking a Billion or so dollars from the DOT with an I.O.U., it is now disclosed that there are 26,800 fewer motor vehicles registered than last year.

At \$75 per registration this amounts to about \$2 million loss of revenue plus gas taxes. This loss was blamed on the economy including the fact that unemployed persons have trouble making car payments.

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A WAY TO CUT HEALTH COSTS.

One of the larger expenses contributing to the high cost of health care is malpractice awards.

Proponents of government health care, (*probably in defense of their trial lawyer friends*) claim that nationally the cost of these awards is only \$20-\$40 Billion a year, or 1-2% of health care costs.

Indirectly the cost of malpractice lawsuits could be much higher. An article in the Sept. 7, issue of "Forbes" relates that a study by the American Society of Orthopedic Surgeons estimates the cost of "defensive medicine" to be as high as \$178 Billion per year. This refers to medical practitioners ordering expensive diagnostic and lab tests even though they are reasonably sure of their diagnosis.

While these tests may be covered by insurance or medicare, they are ordered primarily to protect the practitioners from the fear of malpractice lawsuits. We also hear the cost of malpractice insurance can be as high as \$100,000 for a physician which also adds considerably to the cost of health care.

At least this is something for Obama to think about when he claims his health care plan will be paid for by cutting expenses and taxing "the rich."

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THE RICH WILL PAY.

Democracy in action. The UW system announced a 5.5% tuition and fee increase for the coming year, which will probably average \$500-600 throughout the system. However, students from families earning less than \$60,000 can qualify for grants to pay the increase.

Does this mean that \$60,000 is the new poverty level, the UW is ashamed

over the increases, or those from families earning over \$60,000 should pay the increase for those making under \$60,000?

* * * * *

TOWN HALL MEETINGS.

Much has been said about all of the "town meetings" intended to tout and inform the Presidents health plan initiative.

While the media doesn't seem to understand that people do not embrace the idea of government run health care, some of the frustration could come from putting up with illegal immigration, cap and trade mandates, socialistic ideas, bailouts, Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, tort reform, cash for clunkers, the national debt, taxes, same sex marriage, or a bunch of other "changes" that are being imposed or poorly run.

It is probably a matter of what people personally believe and feel to be important and were being given the opportunity to speak up and be heard.

* * * * *

NO WINNERS IN FOND DU LAC.

Whatever the outcome in Fond du Lac it appears there will be no winners. If Mercury moves it will cost them prestige and massive relocation costs. The union will likely lose either way, and the city and state will lose another prestigious manufacturer along with a slap on the face.

As usual, lots if things to wonder about.

Jim Frink

"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."

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.

The TAX TIMES

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

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The TAX TIMES - September, 2009

BCTA Meeting and Events Schedule – MARK YOUR CALENDARS.

Thursday - September 17, 2009. BCTA Monthly Meeting, 12:00 Noon
Titletown Brewing Co., “Frost Room.”
Scheduled Speaker, John Zakowski,
Brown County District Attorney

Thursday - October 15, 2009. BCTA Monthly Meeting, 12:00 Noon
Titletown Brewing Co., “Frost Room.”
Scheduled Speaker, Elaine Willman,
Administrator, Village of Hobart

Thursday - October 15, 2009. BCTA Monthly Meeting, 12:00 Noon
Titletown Brewing Co., “Frost Room.”
Program to be announced.

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

Meetings are open to the public.

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

COST: \$8.00, Payable at meeting. Includes lunch, tax & tip.

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



September, 2009

“If a politician found he had cannibals among his constituents, he would promise them missionaries for dinner.” . . . H. L. Mencken

“We’d all like to vote for the best man, but he’s never a candidate.”
. . . Kin Hubbard

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