

Congress: Goodbye to Institutional Memory.

"There ain't going to be no money for nothing if we pour it all into Afghanistan. If they ask for an increased troop commitment in Afghanistan, I am going to ask them to pay for it." – US Rep. David Obey

Okay, Dave Obey, so sharp tongued, witty and colorful, a veritable Will Rogers of a lawmaker. And it seems so reasonable to require President O's Administration to pay for government priorities in the war on terror (cough or clear your throat here, maybe blow your nose.) But there is something askew with Obey's 'war surtax'. Can you see it? Not if you look straight at it. Head on it makes some sense, injecting the idea of shared sacrifice in this long and paradigm-shattering war.

President Bush2 failed in that respect, telling Americans after Sept. 11, 2001 to just go back to shopping. Shopping, a traditional American activity after all, would let the terrorists know that they had not won. After all, he calculated, this was a contribution Americans could make to the war on terror.

He was so wrong, and as many Presidents before him, he proceeded to compound his error with his own \$168 billion stimulus plan, featuring absurd, minute (laugh here) tax rebate checks to help you shop. Let's not fail to mention the adieu-unto-you \$700 billion Troubled Asset Relief Program [TARP] encore and another, final curtain \$100 billion to bail out GM and AIG.

Cue the "real" spending please, as First Chair Pelosi and the Peoples Democratic Orchestra, tuned and ready to pick up the next chorus of spending, never missed a beat, plunging the Nation into a debt spiral from which recovery demands the steely nerve and bow string sinew last exhibited by the GI generation.

Back to Obey: Can you see it now, the error of his ways? Here it is:

Dear Mr. Obey: If it is so important that your president pay for an expansion of a war necessary to keep terrorism off our shores, why the Holy Canoli did you not make our Supreme Commander pay for his bloody worthless \$768 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.?!?!?!!!

WHAT IN GOD'S NAME WERE YOU AND CONGRESS THINKING? Where was the need to pay for the war then? You should have every hair of that natty grey beard plucked from your chinny-chin-chin with rusty tweezers in Wausau City Hall by a Republican granny with arthritis and astigmatism.

Priorities are smart at all levels of government, we need to prioritize spending. I can agree we need to prioritize military spending to support our soldiers out there stiff arming terrorism for us unworthy masses. God bless you all.

Mr. Obey, I do not support your war surtax; your sudden realization that we need to prioritize spending - after 40 years in Congress and a chairman's gavel on the House Appropriations Committee - your fiscal epiphany is precisely the reason why we need to hang institutional memory and THROW OUT every last member of your august body.

Spare no one. Throw out every member of CONgress! They always argue how their institutional memory makes them more valuable if re-elected and you know what that institutional memory is worth? Zero, zilch, nada? Were we able to toss the legions of federal bureaucrats with them, we could make a real difference.

Because here is what the Institutional Memory whispers to members of Congress: When your grandfather's Congress faced adversity, they taxed a little more and spent a little more and everything got better. And when your father's Congress stared down woeful times, they taxed a little more and spent a little more and all was well again. So, when trouble breathes down your neck, what are you going to do?

We now have an entire Congress that has never innovated, never even met the Mother of Invention. All they know is, "When the going gets tough, the tough tax a great deal more and spend a great deal more." Incapable of thinking outside that box, as history proves, they won't be able to think for themselves until they are tossed out on their cans.

It is a crying shame, folks, but our backs are against the wall and we have limited choices but to strike out at friend and foe alike. They are all infected and must be purged, to save our constitutional life, liberty and property.

Richard Parins — President

The BROWN COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION
In our 25th Year of Promoting Fiscal Responsibility in Government.

The Green Bay Area School District Budget.

Recently the Green Bay Area School recently approved a \$242 Million budget for the next year, This was \$22 Million more than the previous budget and calls for an increase of \$3.5 Million in the property tax levy. Following is a letter to the board members from Richard Carlstedt which he shared with the **TAX TIMES**.

“To all School Board Members,
Green Bay Public School District

November 11, 2009

I address you not as a member of a taxpayer group, but as an ordinary citizen in your district. Two weeks ago you passed a budget that amounted to almost 1/4 of a Billion Dollars.

The responsibility you have for our education system is enormous with 20,000 students enrolled in our district. Your responsibilities extend to students, parents, school staff and to the approximate 135,000 residents/taxpayers. You are responsible for the quality and the cost of education.

While I can understand that statements and facts in my budget presentation to the Board may not be agreed to by all, the least I do expect is consideration of the content and perhaps some discussion on the issues. I am appalled that you adopted the Administrations budget "lock stock and barrel" without any further consideration to the impact to our community.

Not one question was asked of me, or the Administration, about the numbers after my comments!

How can valid evaluations be made with only one source of input?

In this financial troubling time, with rising job losses, housing foreclosures at a new highs, and if you see this Monday mornings news, seniors are filing for bankruptcies at new records, such budgetary disregard for good financial review and circumstances is uncalled for! (**see <http://www.weau.com/home/headlines/69491882.html> for an example**)

While you may feel a 3% or 5% increase is fine even when you have a large fund balance carryover, such an increase is sizable to those with fixed incomes and may even be devastating.

I also was greatly disappointed with the time required for a response to my questions from the administration. You only allowed 20 days from the time of public awareness to voting on the budget. The only time allowed for public input was a few minutes just before your vote. My few questions to the administration went unanswered for 14 days and still were not fully answered on the morning of your budget approval meeting.

I have the utmost respect for Dr.Maass and Alan Wagner as representatives of the Administration, but you control the time frame and the inquires into financial projections!

I expect as a citizen, for the Board to address these issues in the future and assure the public of:

1. Adequate time for examination and questions from the public to both the Board and the Administration. I believe there should be a minimum of sixty days between the Administration’s budget proposal presentation and the Board’s action to approve a budget and levy.

2. Adequate response times from the District to the public. Administration should be put on notice that prompt responses to public inquires are expected and response times should be measured in days, not weeks.

3. Objective evaluation of public input by the Board on budget issues. If the public offers information or perspective on the proposed budget, there should be some dialog, questions for understanding, and an attempt by Board members to understand or penetrate the differences between such public input and the Administration’s proposal.

I look forward to your response to my comments and suggestions.”

Respectfully yours,

Richard Carlstedt

We asked Mr. Carlstedt if he had received a response from the Board to his letters, and he had not received any commentary or formal reply. One member did E-Mail him apologizing for the delay in responding. We will keep you posted.

BCTA Dues Adjustment.

Since the BCTA was organized 25 years ago, we have kept our annual membership dues the same. Partially by keeping our expenses at a minimum, and as an example to government and other organizations that it is not necessary to raise prices every few years just because you find new ways to spend it.

As you know, our biggest expense item is printing and mailing the **TAX TIMES**. This is sent to our members as well as local and state elected officials, the media and other interested parties.

We have absorbed 14 postal price (*rates, box rent and fees*) adjustments during these 25 years, as well as receiving increases in the other supplies and services we receive.

As a result, we find it necessary to increase our individual dues rate from \$12.00 to \$15.00 annually. Family and corporate dues will remain the same.

Our fiscal year began October 1, and dues notices mailed after that date will be this new rate.

We thank you for your understanding and support. Through our membership we have become one of the most respected taxpayer groups in the State of Wisconsin, and believe we have had a positive impact in our efforts of **“Promoting Fiscal Responsibility in Government.”**

We are always seeking new members. These are trying times for taxpayers, and as a unified voice we believe we can have an influence on our elected officials. **JF**

“The art of politics consists of looking for trouble, finding it everywhere, analyzing it incorrectly and applying the wrong solutions.” . . . **Groucho Marx**

“Politics is the art of preventing people from becoming involved in affairs which concern them.” . . . **Paul Valery**

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.

A 32% tuition increases? *These kids better wake up to what's coming.*

You've most likely heard news of University of California students rioting and damaging university buildings because of a proposed 32% tuition increase for UC students.

UC President Mark Yudof recommended the increase to close a \$535 million budget gap that has forced the system to lay off 2,000 workers, impose faculty furloughs and reduce class offerings. The tuition increase, the eighth since 2002, will bring the annual cost for classes over \$10,000 for the first time.

The above article depicts UC Santa Cruz riots. Not to discriminate, here's a piece on a daylong occupation and "2,000 chanting supporters" at Berkeley.

The occupation of the two-story building on the Berkeley campus ended Friday night as Alameda County sheriffs deputies escorted the protesters, all but two of whom were students, out of the building and past more than 2,000 chanting supporters. The protesters will face misdemeanor trespassing charges.

The third and most tumultuous day of protests reflected the anger being displayed on many UC campuses Friday, a day after the regents voted to increase undergraduate tuition and graduate-level fees to help make up a \$535 million budget gap brought on by reduced state funding and inflation.

Here's my question. Why aren't these kids rioting against the Senate health care bill, the stimulus package, TARP, the War in Afghanistan, unsustainable Social Security payments, \$250 free gifts for Social Security recipients in 2010, or anything else the U.S. government is doing that contributes to our \$12 TRILLION deficit – and MASSIVE, absolutely unsustainable debt payments coming all too soon? Who do they think is going to pay for all that?

Jo Egelhoff, FoxPolitics.net

National Debt Update.

Sometime between the day when Tampa Bay embarrassed the Packers and you were enjoying your Thanksgiving dinner the U.S. National Debt quietly passed the 12 Trillion Dollar mark. It now stands at \$12,049,055,692,907., give or take a few million.

A few years ago this would have been headline news but a few years ago the country may have been just a little bit more frugal.

This amounts to \$39,115 for every U.S. citizen, or \$110,820 for every U.S. citizen who is a taxpayer. Other interesting facts. The average citizen has \$54,182 owing in private debt, so the government is quickly catching up. Also, the total credit card debt is calculated at \$869.4 Billion. What is interesting is that this is about the same amount that has been distributed in stimulus money by Uncle Sam yet they blame individual credit card debt as one of the reasons the economy is so bad. At least most of the credit card debt will be paid.

To keep track of these and other current statistics check out **USDEBTCLOCK.Org**. You will be informed and fascinated. **JF**

"Were we directed from Washington when to sow, and when to reap, we should soon want bread." **Thomas Jefferson**

"I have lived a long time; and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth, that God governs in the Affairs of Men." . . . **Benjamin Franklin**

October Meeting Notes.

Elaine Willman, Director of Community Development & Tribal Affairs for the Village Of Hobart, presented an update about happenings in the village. She began by explaining the Centennial Centre which could include 600 acres of commercial and residential development adding to the Villages tax base.

Ms. Willman reported that relations between the Village of Hobart and the Oneida Tribe of Indians are evolving. Respect for all cultures is a principle of the Village's dealings with the Tribe. As the Village lies entirely within the former Oneida reservation boundary, there are many jurisdictional issues to resolve. The same jurisdictional issues abound across the United States, as there are 562 tribal governments operating over 400 tribal tax-exempt gambling establishments within our country.

Three recent decisions by the Supreme Court of the United States have clarified many jurisdictional issues and restored some powers to local governments. These decisions will make it more difficult for tribal governments to purchase property and remove it from local governments' tax rolls. Previously, federal government officials promulgated rules concerning jurisdiction and property transfer.

Rich Carlstedt reported that he attended the October 6 Green Bay School Board meeting and obtained a copy of the District's 250 page budget document. The new budget proposes \$242 million of spending compared to \$220 million for the last year. The increase includes \$9 million of Stimulus spending. This budget increases the property tax levy by 5.3 percent. Rich is most concerned that \$8 million not spent from the last budget is being transferred to the reserve Fund Balance, increasing it to \$32 million from \$24 million. Instead of adding the \$8 million surplus to the District's reserve, it could have been returned to taxpayers by using it to reduce the District's \$77 million property tax levy more than 10 percent.

November Meeting Notes.

Reid Ribble, candidate for the Eighth Congressional District seat presently held by Dr. Steve Kagen, presented his background and his reasons for running for Congress. He is President of The Ribble Group, Inc., which operates several Fox Valley roofing businesses and does business nationally, creating hundreds of jobs over the years. He is a past president of the National Roofing Contractors Association. He has held several positions in that organization, making many contacts with business people across the U.S.

Mr. Ribble stated that he is very concerned about the future and that government is sucking cash out of the economy that business needs to grow and create jobs. True leadership is needed.

Green Bay Alderman John Vander Leest spoke briefly about his opposition to establishing a Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) to take over the Green Bay area transit system. He has concerns about the creation of another unit of government with taxing and bonding authority.

President Richard Parins reported that he spoke at the Brown County Board's annual budget meeting on November 9, requesting the board members not to add to the budget unless offsetting reductions were made. He noted that the Board did not add much and then approved a furlough program for administrative employees to provide some offsetting cost reductions. The next meeting is scheduled for Dec. 17, at Titledown. Details on back page. **Dave Nelson – Secretary**

Health Care, *The Debate Goes On.*

There are probably very few of us who will agree that the country's health care system is entirely satisfactory, or that all citizens receive equal benefits and care. While most accounts claim we have the best system in the world, it is expensive and not everyone seems to receive the same level of care. It is in effect a \$2.5 Trillion dollar industry.

The cost to employers providing employee insurance benefits increases annually, often making it difficult to provide other benefits or even operate at a profit. The annual cost to taxpayers to provide government employees with their guaranteed benefits often exceeds the cost of wages and other benefits, and is a major reason our taxes keep increasing. Individuals paying for their own insurance face annual premium increases in excess of other cost of living items. Those without insurance face bankruptcy if they require major medical services.

We acknowledge the under insured and uninsured are a problem causing additional expense and burden on the rest of us. The Census Bureau estimates there are 45.7 million people without health insurance in the country at any one time. However, they also estimate more than half of these are undocumented immigrants, are eligible for other govt. programs, people who could afford insurance but choose not to take it, or would not be interested in insurance for various other reasons.

In addition to the cost of insurance, there are a lot of reasons the cost of healthcare is so high. For example, lab tests and expensive specialists are more commonly used. Hospitals and clinics have expanded and modernized their facilities and keep raising their rates accordingly. Medical malpractice lawsuits and the cost of liability insurance to providers presents a huge cost we all end up paying for. The list goes on and on and I am sure we all have examples of the high cost medical procedures which fortunately were covered by insurance or government programs.

Perhaps the biggest culprit has been the Federal Government itself. Cumbersome regulations and red tape result in paperwork and extra personnel to handle compliance. Medicare and Medicaid which arbitrarily reimburse healthcare providers unrealistic amounts for services provided pass many costs on to other consumers.

The Government Solution.

Now, citing the need for reform, "to insure the uninsured, control runaway health spending, subdue future deficits, preserve choice for patients and improve quality of care," the Obama administration is pushing for comprehensive health care legislation. Call it whatever you want.

Calls for a universal, government managed health plan in this country have been circulating for years. Many of the world's industrialized nations have plans which may suit their situations but would never be acceptable in the United States. The cost of healthcare services themselves may be overlooked due to the high cost of insurance. We probably tend to forget that those without insurance are also a cost to us all.

Perhaps the greatest impetus for politicians to push for health care reform was the knowledge that the cost of health care insurance was creating a financial burden on individuals and business.

It was easy for politicians to blame the insurance companies for the problem. You always need a scapegoat to initiate an action, the since the insurance companies were the ones you pay for your healthcare let them take the blame for rising prices. No consideration for the fact they are a business just like any other performing a service, employing workers contributing to the economy and trying to make a profit. No consideration for the fact that a good many of us result in more claims paid by insurers than we provide in premium revenue. No consideration that for the reasons

given previously, plus others such as malpractice lawsuits and care provided the uninsured are dramatically raising the costs of providing health insurance coverage. The problem is the cost of the service and not the insurance.

We're from the Government and we're here to help. We can offer you insurance you can afford. In fact we can offer it to all citizens. We will cover just about everybody and everything. No problem if you can't afford it. We will raise a few taxes here and there and make rich people pay for it. We will cover items not presently covered by insurance, and even lower the price of expensive drugs. You will live happily ever after. Sounds great and just the kind of health care solution everyone expects and is looking for from our government. Is it too good to be true?

Remember Hillarycare from 15 years ago. The committee charged with formulating a plan presented to Congress gathered such a cornucopia of provisions that it eventually died of its own weight. Congress at that time apparently realized the cost and red tape involved would not be acceptable to the American people. What is different now?

The President's Plan.

From the time President Obama was elected his focus has been on Health Care Reform. Any opposition from Congress, insurance providers, the medical profession, or anyone else who had an interest in the final outcome one way or the other was compromised with promises of sharing

the wealth or getting what they wanted.

Now here is where we begin to really wonder. After the wish lists from all parties involved was ready, a 1,990 page bill called "The Affordable Health Care for America Act" was quietly passed by Congress in the middle of a Saturday night. Simply put, the "Wall Street Journal" referred to it as the worst bill ever. Last minute endorsements from AARP which is a strong supporter of any government benefits for its members and the AFL-CIO which had made large contributions to the Presidents and Congressional election campaigns no doubt had an influence. They did make a few changes (additions) along the way as the bill had grown to 2,067 pages when it was approved by Congress.

1,990 Page Health Care bill as it was originally presented to Congress for passage.

Courtesy of AFP.

Reasons for Caution.

While you may favor health care reform and honestly feel it is the best for the country, do you know what all is in those 2,000 pages? How many Congressmen actually read and understand the bill? You can hide a lot of things in 2,000 pages of fine print compiled by Congressmen, lawyers and lobbyists but written by legalese translators.

As an example, remember last summer's state budget. That was only 1,000 pages thick and new laws, taxes, and mandates are still crawling out of the fine print to make life miserable for all of us.

The media has done their job in publicizing the good things the plan offers. Most of them are necessary changes to our health care system and enjoy broad support. It is the things that are not publicized to watch out for. Firing people for refusing to take insurance? How will your present insurance be affected? How will abortions, illegal immigrants, pre-existing conditions, expensive drugs, private options, and a thousand other items be handled, now or next year? Once the government gets it foot further in the door, there is no limit to the changes they can make. An example is the federal tax laws which have grown dramatically each year until now they regulate just about everything individuals or private industry does. Think about it.

In any event, it would require another huge federal agency just to keep track of everybody and their health care transactions and affairs.

For the health bill to become law a version must be passed by the Senate, and then a compromise bill must be agreed upon to be presented to the President for his signature.

As this is written, the bill in the Senate, called the Patient Protection Care Act, has grown to 2,307 pages, or 327 pages more than Congress started with. What a compromise will look like is anybody's guess.

Who Gets to Pay The Bill?

Most of all, how and who is going to pay for all of this? What will be the cost of a Health Reform plan? President Obama has declared it will not add one penny to the National Debt. If true, this would probably be a government program first. What is more puzzling is that sponsors of the Senate Bill have calculated the cost to be exactly \$848 Billion during the next decade. How they figured this out with any degree of accuracy is anyone's guess. More likely something they thought the amount would sound good and nobody would bother to ask questions. Like with Medicare, the Prescription Drug Bill, Social Security or the Iraq War.

Taking everything into consideration, the Congressional Budget Office, which is charged with calculating the cost of all proposed legislation estimates the cost over ten years would actually be about \$1.8 Trillion, even though many of the provisions would take up to five years to be in place. Are there any limits to what "the rich" and business employers are willing or even able to pay for health care? Can we assume no more wars, natural disasters, financial crises or recessions in the meantime.

To Summarize.

We apologize for perhaps oversimplifying some of the factors involved in this debate, and acknowledge that our present health care system has many flaws which need fixing. Also, the poor and uninsured are always going to be a problem and require taxpayer assistance.

Is this the time for a massive overhaul of the system? With a \$12 Trillion National Debt with no visible signs of reduction is this really what we need? How about a Congressional committee that would sit down and really analyze the factors that are driving the cost of health care? Leave the lobbyists out of the discussions, and question the medical profession, drug manufacturers, insurance providers, and other qualified parties just exactly where their income comes from and where it goes. How much time and cost is related to government regulation and paperwork, and is it of any benefit to them? Are there better safeguards to prevent malpractice lawsuits and the massive cost of insuring against them. Are the charges by hospitals, specialists and other providers realistic, or padded to cover other expenses? Do insurers adequately audit claims to prevent overcharges and fraud?

Is the solution pumping more of our money into the system and making it more complex or reducing the costs?

Jim Frink - BCTA

"If you are afraid to speak out against tyranny, then you are already a slave."

. . . John Bryant

Swift Action Needed On Job Creation.

Talk to anyone on the street and you will find that the biggest concerns on people's minds are jobs and the economy. Unless you've been living in a cave, it has been this way for quite a long time. If folks haven't already lost their job, their home, or their investments, they are worried that it's going to happen.

The national unemployment rate is now 10.2%, the highest it has been in 26 years. October figures show that 230,000 Wisconsinites are unemployed and looking for work. Recently, State Commerce Secretary Dick Leinenkugel told a gathering at the UW Business School that the state's unemployment rate will likely increase into 2010 and job losses will mount during the next six months. Wisconsin's business climate is ranked the 3rd worst in the nation by Forbes Magazine and 8th worst by the non-partisan Tax Foundation. Governor Doyle and the Democrats passed a budget bill and a budget-repair bill this year that raised taxes and fees by over \$5 billion making our economy even worse. With these facts, who wouldn't be concerned about their financial future?

Our workers, our families, and our economy are struggling to make it through these difficult economic times, and I strongly believe that the legislature's number one priority for this legislative session should be jobs and the economy. Putting our economy back on track, getting the unemployed back to work, and helping our hometown businesses survive this recession should not be partisan issues. But out of 181 bills passed by the State Assembly this year, only one of them has any effect to create jobs in our state. Unfortunately, the results of federal stimulus funding have been grossly overstated, with few private sector jobs actually created.

Democrats control both houses of the legislature and the Governor's office, so they have the ability to act quickly on issues they deem important. For example, "Race to the Top" education legislation was introduced, approved in the committee process, passed by both houses of the legislature, and signed into law in less than two weeks. In the meantime, numerous job-creation bills developed by the Jobs NOW task force have been languishing in committee for months without so much as a public hearing. These common-sense, bi-partisan ideas were developed after listening to more than 150 employers, local chambers of commerce, and manufacturing and industry experts statewide. They offer very specific improvements that can help create jobs in Wisconsin immediately.

Assembly Republican leaders sent a letter to Assembly Speaker Mike Sheridan urging him to convene the Assembly in Extraordinary Session to pass much needed legislation on jobs and economic development right away so it could be signed into law by Governor Doyle before the end of the year. To date, we've received no response from him. However, within days of sending the letter, the Chairman of the Assembly Committee on Jobs, Economy, and Small Business, of which I am a member, suddenly scheduled a last minute "Informational Hearing" where members of the public can come talk about small business issues.

While a lot of these "Informational Hearings" this year, but to date, no legislation has been developed as a result of any of them, and no action has been taken on numerous other job creation bills. Even though jobs and the economy are the most pressing issues of the day, the Chairman scheduled a 131 day recess over the summer. While Wisconsin lost jobs, the committee did absolutely nothing for four and a half months.

Just like Professor Harold Hill's "Think System" in The Music Man couldn't produce a single sound on any band instruments, neither can rhetoric create any jobs or improve our state's economy. It takes action, and so far the majority-party has done very little of that. What are we waiting for?

Rep. Karl Van Roy

Things That Make Us Wonder.

EARNING YOUR MONEY.

Interesting that the highest paid person on the state payroll is the UW-Madison head football coach. \$400,000 annually with up to \$1.5 Mil with bonuses and endorsements. Yes, we realize he is probably competitively worth even more and his program brings in a lot of bucks for the schools athletic program.

Maybe that explains why he is paid even more than the Governor.

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UNION FORCES RANSOM PAYOFF.

Mercury Marine's decision to remain in Fond du Lac came with a cost. Wisconsin taxpayers could pay up to \$70 Million to the company in job credits if the company retains 2,700 jobs in Wisconsin, about 800 more than at present.

Also, Fond du Lac County, which previously did not have a county sales tax initiated one to pay for a \$50 million loan to the company. No doubt the county could have found other ways to spend sales tax income. The city of Fond du Lac is providing another \$3 Million.

One question remaining is what factors made the company want to leave Wisconsin and if other major employees will now threaten to leave?

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THE ENVIRONMENT AND JOBS.

The Wisconsin Policy Research Institute claims that the recommendations from Gov. Doyle's Global Warming Task Force could cost the state 49,000 jobs with an income loss of \$9.7 Billion during the next 11 years.

While there is a lot of work to be done on the proposal full consideration should be given to balancing the economy with the need for adequate energy.

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MONK TO THE RESCUE.

Green Bay native Tony Shaloub was in town promoting his new movie. Too bad he couldn't have come as his TV character "Monk", and spend a few days. Just think how he could help local law enforcement officials sort out the Tom Monfils murder and other complex mysteries that have been around for a while.

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DO WE NEED MORE TAXES?

"Americans For Tax Reform," an independent tax research organization reports the hypothetical day the average Wisconsin citizen completes paying his local, state and federal tax obligation this year was April 13. Otherwise know as *Tax Freedom Day*.

However, they also note that it takes Wisconsin residents to August 12, to meet their obligation of what is called "*Cost of Government Day*," which is the total of all taxes collected, including the hidden taxes mostly imposed on business. They also estimate and include a total of about 24% covering government regulations and the cost of compliance.

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HEY, WE'RE NUMBER 10!

The Pew Center, an independent, non-partisan organization which tracks state government policy and spending has listed the top 10 states with the worst fiscal condition.

California topped the list, followed by Arizona, Rhode Island, Michigan, Nevada, Oregon, Florida, New Jersey, Illinois, and rounding out the list, Wisconsin. I suppose the Governor could make this sound good by proclaiming that there are **only** 40 states in better financial shape than Wisconsin.

While these states are from different parts of the country with varying economies, the common denominator in their fiscal problems seems to be too much spending with too little revenue.

They point out that Wisconsin began the year with a \$6.6 Billion shortfall, and after raising taxes and fees by \$2.1 Billion, using \$2.2B in stimulus funds and furloughing state employees were still \$2 Billion in the hole. Not a good situation.

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ANOTHER STATE MANDATE?

The Dept. of Revenue is suggesting the state require that counties handle property assessments rather than by municipalities as at present. Beside eliminating about 1,800 assessors in towns and cities, it could change the value of your property by making statewide values more uniform.

While larger cities have their own full-time staffs and standards there seems to be more discrepancy in rural areas. Whatever happens don't expect your property taxes to go down.

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MEDICINE OF THE FUTURE?

A bill has been introduced in the Legislature legalizing marijuana for medical use. Patients would have to suffer from a disease on a list prepared by the state and could purchase up to 3 oz from a licensed "compassion center" or grow up to 12 plants on their own.

Does this have something to do with all the marijuana they have found growing on state land recently.

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YOUR MONEY IN ACTION.

As could probably be expected, much of the billions of dollars of federal stimulus money spent for job creation have been wasted or simply disappeared.

Figures furnished by the Obama administration simply don't add up. They have reported millions of dollars spent with few jobs actually created. Some claims were completely fictitious. Examples are \$19 M spent in Oklahoma to create 15 jobs in a Congressional district that doesn't exist. \$10.6 M spent to create 39 jobs in another non-existent district.

Here in Wisconsin \$680 Million was doled out to create or retain a total of 8,248 jobs. However about 75% of these were government jobs which is probably another way of saying the money was sidetracked to beef up the state budget.

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YOUR TAXES PAY LEGAL FEES.

The *Press-Gazette* reported the City of Green Bay spent over \$300,000 in legal fees the last two years on issues with the cities employee unions. This was in addition to \$500,000 for the city to operate its own legal department. Much of this money was spent to negotiate petty bickering over compliance with union contracts.

This obviously is a lot of money representing items eliminated from the cities budget in the interest of taxpayers. Even more money for employee salaries.

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DRUG COMPANIES TO PROFIT.

Major drug manufacturers seem to be in line for huge profits from a health care plan and have somewhat supported it accordingly. They have good lobbyists.

According to the *New York Times*, they have agreed to cut or at least hold their prices. However, in the meantime they have been busy raising their prices, 9% in the last year alone. Figure

that one out.

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PROPERTY TAXES AFTER THE QEO.

The Dept. of Public Instruction reports that school district tax levies will increase an average of 7.16% for next year. Various factors are responsible, including a reduction in state aids.

Next year may be even more of a challenge as the Qualified Economic Offer, or QEO, was eliminated as a result of Gov. Doyle's state budget.

This has been a thorn in the side of public school teachers and their union since it was put into effect 16 years ago, and capped annual teacher compensation packages at 3.8 percent. They will now have to deal with the economy in general.

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WHAT CAN WE SELL TO CHINA?

Governor Doyle has made three trips to China in efforts to promote export trade for Wisconsin business. There are a lot of complicated factors involved beyond simply producing what they need and writing up an order.

An example is to years ago there were 1,500 Wisconsin farmers selling all of the ginseng they could grow to China while now the number is down to 150 and the price has dropped dramatically. The reason given is that our quality has dropped and other areas are more competitive.

Maybe we could try selling the Chinese some of our states forest grown marijuana we have been reading about.*

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WHY NOT TORT REFORM?

The Obama administration keeps trying to negate the costs of their health care plan. They use statements like "it won't add to the national debt," "we will tax the rich to pay for it," and "it will ONLY cost \$848 Billion in the next 10 years." In the meantime they keep adding proposed benefits and all sorts of other promises to various skeptical groups trying to gain their support. It gets worse by the day.

One group on the fence is the American Medical Association, with most of our countries doctors. They have a lot to lose or gain.

One major problem they face now is the threat of malpractice lawsuits. A survey of 2,000 doctors by Jackson Healthcare solutions found that 92% want medical healthcare (tort) reform, and 85% report the threat of litigation is hampering

their ability to practice medicine properly.

While we acknowledge that certain lawsuits may be in order, limitations on settlements should also apply. The AMA estimates that by eliminating the costs of defensive medicine, a savings of \$200 Billion could be saved annually. This could be well in excess of the estimated costs of Government run health care that are being thrown at us.

So far tort reform is not being considered as part of the plan.

Why Not? Very simple. Trial and personal injury lawyers have been large donors to the election campaigns of many of those in Congress. They are fearful of losing a big part of their livelihood and Congress is looking after them.

That's how politics works.

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UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS COSTLY.

One of the problems of massive unemployment is the benefits which have been guaranteed by unemployment compensation benefits.

Even though contributions to the fund these benefits are paid from is paid by business and the rates have been increased dramatically in recent years Wisconsin in one of 25 states which have borrowed from the Federal government to cover claims.

At present we owe \$734.2 million. Unfortunately cutting unemployment benefits is not a popular option.

* * * * *

UNEMPLOYMENT FIGURES VARY.

While unemployment in Wisconsin and the country has ranged from 8-10% this year, an article from the *New York Times* claims it is probably closer to 17.5% due to people who have given up on seeking jobs and part-time workers who would like to be working full time.

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THE FUEL OF THE FUTURE?

One new source of energy is biomass power plants which use gasified wood waste to run power plants producing electricity. They claim the process doesn't pollute the atmosphere.

In a related article, while this could create a market for waste wood including debris left in a forest after logging, it could actually create a shortage of raw material in Wisconsin if it works.

* * * * *

PAYING THE NATIONAL DEBT.

This year interest on the National Debt will cost the Federal Govt. about \$202 Billion. However by 2019 it is expected to exceed \$700 Billion. This is just for interest and still leaves the principal. This all has to do with present policies of short-term borrowing to pay long term debts and other things Congress doesn't understand.

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REFRIGERATORS FOR ICEBOXES.

So many people took advantage of the "Cars for Clunkers" which cost taxpayers \$3 Billion that Congress is now considering a similar program to encourage people to replace old refrigerators, dishwashers, air conditioners, etc., for new energy efficient models to conserve energy.

While this will no doubt be welcomed by appliance dealers and the public, we could probably find ways to save energy without the government encouraging us to buy new appliances and throwing out the old.

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

"In America, you can go on the air and kid the politicians, and the politicians can go on the air and kid the people." . . . **Groucho Marx**

"On one hand, the necessity of borrowing in particular emergencies cannot be doubted, it is equally evident that to be able to borrow upon good terms, it is essential that the credit of a nation should be well established." . . . **Alexander Hamilton**

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www.BCTaxpayers.Org
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BCTA@ExecPc.Com

The TAX TIMES

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Health Care. *The Debate Goes On.*
Swift Action Needed On Job Creation.
Things That Make Us Wonder.
and more.**

The TAX TIMES - December, 2009

BCTA Meeting and Events Schedule – MARK YOUR CALENDARS.

**Thursday - December 17, 2009. BCTA Monthly Meeting, 12:00 Noon
Titledown Brewing Co., “Frost Room.”
Scheduled Speaker – Terri McCormick, 8th District
Congressional Candidate.**

**Thursday - January 21, 2010. BCTA Monthly Meeting, 12:00 Noon
Titledown Brewing Co., “Frost Room.”
Scheduled Speaker – Rep. Roger Roth, 8th District
Congressional Candidate.**

**Thursday - February 18, 2010. BCTA Monthly Meeting, 12:00 Noon
Titledown Brewing Co., “Frost Room.”
Scheduled Speaker – Mark Neumann, Candidate for
Wisconsin Governor.**

**NOTICE: All candidates and incumbents for public office are cordially
invited to attend meetings and be recognized.**

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

Meetings are open to the public.

**BCTA Members, their guests and other interested parties are 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.

*Peace on
Earth*

**December,
2009**

“We do not have to worry about the
United States. They will soon spend
themselves out of existence.”

. . . Nikita Krushchev

“He that goes a borrowing goes a
sorrowing.” . . . Benjamin Franklin

“Success is the ability to go from
one failure to another with no loss
of enthusiasm.” . . . Winston Churchill

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for Details.**