

Sit Down and Shut Up.

Somebody tell government to sit down and shut up!

Let me mix some metaphors for you. Suppose you're about to drown. Do you go for bottom to push up faster or do you swim for the surface and hope you get there?

In California, Gov. Ahnold is drowning in a \$26 billion budget hole. But, standing on rock bottom, does he push off and rocket to the surface? NO. Like Wile E. Coyote, Genius, he draws out an Acme jackhammer to blast the hole, \$500 million deeper – in the name of worker training! Chant it with me: Ed-u-ca-tion, like you're in church: Ed-u-ca-tion. Like watching Tony Stewart make his winning move, Schwarzenegger said, "bold is what we do in California." Bold? Oh, please pass the steroids. What balderdash, claptrap, rot and twaddle!

Although some may give Gov. Ahnold credit for proposing permanent cuts, and thereby replacing state worker furloughs, he has yet to strong-arm the Public Employee Unions strangling California's budget. California taxpayers suffer 15,000 public employee retirees who receive in excess of \$ 100,000 annual pensions while Illinois suffers more than 2,000 public employee retirees receiving a \$ 100,000 plus annual pension. Hello neighbor.... how's it going for you? While Gov. Ahnold labeled as "bribes" some unconstitutional Medicaid subsidies used to buy votes for the health care reform fiasco, he's term limited and simply "pumping up." So Gov. Ahnold, please pass the steroids to Diamond Jim, maybe he'll grow some hair, or better yet, he may grow him some cojones.

And into the teeth of this flies Diamond Jim, who will screw the Wisconsin Taxpayer any way, anyhow for a crisp, new stack of Monopoly money Obama is printing called Race to the Top – competitive education grants worth about \$612 million to Wisconsin (It could be more, if fewer states apply or submit unworthy proposals.) To reach this stack of crispies Gov. Doyle is blessing Milwaukee Public Schools with Mayor Barrett as a bold reformer of a failed system. All this he will do without assigning responsibility for the past failures, all this in order to pilfer more taxpayer money. But, what if Barrett wins the race for governor; will Gov. Barrett give control of MPS to himself?

In order to pleasure businesses and employers Diamond Jim Doyle has introduced his Clean Energy Jobs Act, which businesses and economists say will cost 43,000 jobs or 15,000 jobs, but who cares? But "Hand on the Deck" Doyle says his package of "green" energy pledges and emissions limits will create 15,000 jobs. If Doyle counts jobs like his buddy President Obama, I imagine both cases would be true – Doyle adds his 15,000 green government jobs; private sector loses 43,000, for a net loss of 28,000 real jobs.

But maybe we simply need some supply-side economics, like our Hoosier cousins. That is legislation forcing government to shrink by cutting off its money supply. Wow, doesn't that sound like something called the "Taxpayer Protection Act?" Indiana lawmakers have set a referendum on turning property tax caps into a constitutional amendment limiting taxes to 1% of a home's assessed value, 2% for rental and farm property, and 3% for business property. Will Wisconsinites notice, can we get the pols to even listen?

Herein lies the simple, single truth that the American citizen no longer believes you, the political elitists. You speak but your actions do not match what you say. You spend when you say you cut, and folks believe you lie! Maybe the most important abuse of the public trust is the soft, safe retirement and benefit package you vote yourself, the annual raises you vote yourself. Shame on you, Shame on you!

When will government sit down and shut up? Were government to get out of the way after eliminating the corporate tax, the wasteful Commerce Dept, subsidies and grants, and bureaucrats then maybe we could flip the job picture – eliminate 15,000, no 50,000 government jobs and thereby open opportunities for 43,000, no 60,000, private sector jobs.

Listen more carefully than ever this spring and summer then connect the arrows for those candidates promising to do stuff for you, but for those who will remove obstacles to doing stuff for yourself. This is not "change you can believe in," but change you can create, change you can do for yourselves, without the shackles of a government handout, the burden of regulation and the pitiful rhetoric of those pretending to lead.

Vote for the government shrinkers, not the government stinkers. Vote for those yelling at government to sit down and shut up, and get out of the way!

Richard Parins — President

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

The President's Cabinet, *and the President's Czars.*

It is the duty of every President-elect to select the members of his cabinet of his cabinet prior to his inauguration. In their order of importance as successors to the President after the Vice-president and Speaker of the House are the Secretaries of State, Treasury, Defense, Justice, Interior, Agriculture, Commerce, Labor, Health & Human Services, Housing & Urban Development, Transportation, Energy, Education, Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security.

In addition to meeting with the President, either as a group or individually to discuss matters of national importance, these 15 individuals also are in charge of virtually all federal government departments and agencies which may fall under their jurisdictions.

Some of these agencies employ hundreds of thousands of employees, and the Secretary is responsible for their management, including budgeting and following policies as established by Congress and the administration. As chief executives of these huge and varied government bureaucracies, they are responsible for appointing administrators, ambassadors, and the overall operation as set forth by the Constitution. Through the years many sub-departments have evolved under the jurisdiction of the Cabinet Secretaries. All in all, it is an immense responsibility calling for an extreme amount of talent, dedication, and expertise.

What criteria does a President and his staff use in selection cabinet members? While experience and ability should be the primary consideration remember we are dealing with poli-

tics. Obviously loyalty and similar political beliefs are important. Familiarity with the department and what is expected is to be expected would be helpful but is probably not mandatory. Diversity has become a major factor in recent years. Their background should not reveal any character flaws which may surface later. Have they paid their taxes and obeyed the laws? Have they tried to buy the position? We would like to assume that lists of potential candidates are carefully screened before their appointments are announced, and to avoid embarrassments later, the same as with any important job.

One item which could qualify one group over another is the employment record on their résumés. Are they career government employees such as a governor or senator, or was their experience a CEO from private industry? Their philosophy and approach to the important job could be entirely different. While private industry executives are profit motivated; balancing cost with profits in order to grow their employer and shareholders, a public employment background can be completely the opposite. While cabinet members should be aware of the way business is conducted in Washington. Their focus must be on pleasing Congress and the Administration, and above all maintain good relations with the media. Needless to say their approach to funding, personnel, budgeting and what they are trying to accomplish with their resources are vastly different from the private sector.

It is apparent that through the years, each President has had a different philosophy as to the selection of their cabinet members. The chart at the left of this column illustrates that. This may relate to their own backgrounds and perhaps what they want to accomplish during their term of office. Draw your own conclusions. You will note however, that for the most part there has been a combination of individuals with both private and public backgrounds selected. We acknowledge good and bad appointments have come from both the public and private sectors.

While the Presidents Cabinet takes care of the nuts and bolts aspects of Government operation, there is one other layer of federal bureaucracy that has become common in recent administrations. These are the so-called executive branch "Czars." These are people appointed by the President to oversee a particular policy, problem, or situation. They are not responsible to Congress, but have the authority to establish public policy. FDR used these appointments during WWII, and more recently Pres. Clinton and Bush have appointed individuals to study problems such as AIDS, the U.S. Border and National Security, Energy, Drugs, the Environment and Technology. It seems that President Obama has carried this power a step further with Auto, Bank Bailout, Climate, Global Warming, Domestic Violence, Green Jobs, Health, Stimulus, and Compensation Czars.

Jim Frink - BCTA

National Debt Update.

At the end of January, the U. S. National Debt reached **\$12.35 Trillion**, an increase of about **\$170 Billion** since the end of December. Don't worry - you will be comforted to know that back in December Congress increased the limit to \$12.4 Trillion so the Bureau of Printing and Engraving can keep busy for a few more days.

Presently the Senate is considering raising the limit to **\$14.3 Trillion**, which would give us the authority to borrow more money from China and Arab countries until next year sometime. Reasons they gave for this increase is they wanted to concentrate on their re-elections this fall and didn't want to be distracted by the government running out of money and getting people mad.

Currently, each U. S. citizen would owe a little over \$40,000 of the National Debt, plus whatever their state and municipality owes, plus their own credit card and mortgage debt. The National Debt grows the fastest.

When FDR took office in 1933 the total was about \$18 Billion or \$145 per capita. Although he is credited with ushering in the era of big spending, the total when he died in 1945 was about \$250 Billion and we had WWII to pay for. You can look it up.

The total debt didn't reach a Trillion until sometime in 1982. We all recognize a Million as a nice pile of money. Realize that a Billion is a thousand Million, and a Trillion is a thousand Billion. Don't really know what comes next but Congress certainly seems to be working on it for us.

JF

"You can't build a reputation on what you are going to do." . . Henry Ford

"Truth is generally the best vindication against slander." Abraham Lincoln

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.

January Meeting Notes.

Roger Roth Addresses BCTA.

Monthly Brown County Taxpayers Association meeting conducted January 21, 2010, at Titledown Brewing ..

Roger Roth, candidate for the Eighth Dist. Congressional District seat, addressed the meeting. He is presently serving as the 56th Assembly District Representative to the State Assembly. Roger is a third generation homebuilder in the Appleton area, which gives him a clear understanding of the needs of small business. He is a member of the Air National Guard, serving since 2003. He has had four tours of duty in the Middle East, and has just returned from his third tour of Iraq.

Roger explained that people are hungry for change, looking for new leadership. "We're not a third world nation," he stated, "We have third world leadership." He declared that, if elected, he will live in the district, attend local events, and be available to the citizens of the district.

Illustrating the incomprehensible cost of the proposed healthcare bill, Roger noted that it amounts to \$2.4 million per word in the 2,000-page document. In contrast, he explained that, according to Congressional Budget Office estimates, the healthcare bill proposed by Representative Paul Ryan would lower healthcare insurance costs about 7 to 10 percent for a family. Among other changes, the Ryan bill would allow insurance companies to sell health insurance across state lines.

The Cap and Trade Bill is a transfer of wealth that will cost 2 million jobs, Roger explained. We need nuclear power plants for a reliable power supply. He stated that our energy policy must encourage gas and oil production in the United States.

Rich Carlstedt announced that the Green Bay School Board is holding an information session on a proposed referendum to finance \$18.2 million of projects for district schools. It will be held at 5:00 pm on Monday, January 25 at the district office building on South Broadway. Rich explained his concerns about the school district's lack of planning for regular maintenance expenditures, and encouraged members to attend the information session.

The next BCTA meeting is scheduled for Thursday, Feb. 18, 2010, at Titledown Brewing Co. The speaker will be Mark Neumann, former Congressman and candidate for Wisconsin Governor. Details on the back page of this Tax Times.

Dave Nelson – Secretary

"If you take all the experience and judgment of men over fifty out of the world there wouldn't be enough left to run it." . . . Henry Ford

"The whole art of Government consists in the art of being honest." . . . Thomas Jefferson

"The difference between death and taxes is that death doesn't get worse every time Congress meets." . . . Will Rogers

50 Examples of Government Waste.

Government spending is out of control, and the Obama administration does not seem to be able to do anything about it. The President did propose eliminating \$140 million from his \$3.6 Trillion 2010 budget, which was about the equivalent of 1/25,000 of the budget. In his recent state of the union address he suggested eliminating a couple of billion here and there but this would not start until next year. Hardly serious budget cutting.

The Heritage Foundation, an independent, non-partisan foundation recently compiled a study, "50 Examples of Government Waste." Our space is limited but we would like to share a few of the items they identified.

First they identified six major categories of wasteful and unnecessary spending: **1. Programs that should be devolved to state and local governments;** **2. Programs that could be better performed by the private sector;** **3. Mismatched programs whose recipients should not be entitled to government benefits;** **4. Outdated and unnecessary programs;** **5. Duplicative programs;** and **6. Inefficiency, mismanagement, and fraud.**

Some of the specific programs they identified and annual amount of money wasted are as follows: The federal government made at least **\$72 billion** in improper payments in 2008. Washington spends **\$92 billion** on corporate welfare (excluding TARP). Washington spends **\$25 billion** annually maintaining unused or vacant federal properties. Government auditors examined all federal programs and found that 22 percent of them--costing taxpayers a total of **\$123 billion** annually--fail to show any positive impact on the populations they serve.

The Congressional Budget Office published a "Budget Options" series identifying more than **\$100 billion** in potential spending cuts. Wasteful duplication include 342 economic development programs; 130 programs serving the disabled; 130 programs serving at-risk youth; 90 early childhood development programs; 75 programs funding international education, cultural, and training exchange activities; and 72 safe water programs.

A GAO audit classified nearly half of all purchases on government credit cards as improper, fraudulent, or embezzled. Examples of taxpayer-funded purchases include gambling, mortgage payments, liquor, lingerie, iPods, Xboxes, jewelry, Internet dating services, and Hawaiian vacations. The Pentagon recently spent **\$998,798** shipping two 19-cent washers from South Carolina to Texas and **\$293,451** sending an 89-cent washer from South Carolina to Florida. Over half of all farm subsidies go to commercial farms, which report average household incomes of \$200,000. Health care fraud is estimated to cost taxpayers more than **\$60 billion** annually. A GAO audit found that 95 Pentagon weapons systems suffered from a combined **\$295 billion** in cost overruns. The refusal of many federal employees to fly coach costs taxpayers \$146 million annually in flight upgrades. Washington will spend **\$126 million** in 2009 to enhance the Kennedy family legacy in Massachusetts.

Despite trillion-dollar deficits, last year's 10,160 earmarks included **\$200,000** for a tattoo removal program in Mission Hills, California; **\$190,000** for the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in Cody, Wyoming; and \$75,000 for the Totally Teen Zone in Albany, Georgia. The federal government owns more than 50,000 vacant homes. More than **\$13 billion** in Iraq aid has been classified as wasted or stolen. Another **\$7.8 billion** cannot be accounted for.

Fraud related to Hurricane Katrina spending is estimated to top **\$2 billion**. Debit cards provided to hurricane victims were used to pay for Caribbean vacations, NFL tickets, "Girls Gone Wild" videos, and at least one sex change operation. Auditors discovered that 900,000 of the 2.5 million recipients of emergency Katrina assistance provided false names, addresses, or Social Security numbers or submitted multiple applications. *Sorry but we are out of space. Will try to list more items next issue, but you get the idea.* Jim Frink – BCTA

The Costs of Governor Doyle's Global Warming Bill.

Since early December, Governor Doyle has been on a mission to drum up support for his Global Warming legislation. The Governor has the benefits out there for all to see, but the costs associated with the proposal's new government mandates, regulations and utility customer-funded subsidies are rarely mentioned. This intentional slight-of-hand is right out of the Politics 101 playbook being used now by the leaders in charge of Washington and Madison. Governor Doyle, like Congressional leaders in Washington, honestly believe legislation can, and should, be enacted into law based solely on the promise of benefits without any consideration of the corresponding costs of the benefits.

While Governor Doyle has the luxury of playing the role of "Cheerleader-and-Chief" for his Global Warming bill, the Wisconsin State Legislature does not. Legislators have a duty to thoughtfully evaluate it based on a thorough review of the proposal's costs and benefits, and as a member of the Assembly Special Committee on Clean Energy Jobs, I take this responsibility very seriously.

The cornerstone of the Governor's Global Warming legislation is a new state government mandate requiring utilities to produce 25% of their electricity from renewable resources by 2025. Cost-benefit analysis of this provision concluded that the net cost would exceed \$16 billion – a significant portion would be paid for through higher monthly electric utility bills.

Next is the "New Wisconsin Gasoline Mandate." Reducing our reliance on Middle East oil is a laudable and worthy goal. Wisconsin is well on its way to achieving that goal because nearly 50% of our state's gasoline supply is derived from Canadian crude oil. A significant portion of the Canadian crude oil comes from the Canadian oil sands. Unlike Middle East oil which is classified as "light crude," crude oil derived from Canadian oil sands is classified as "heavy." The difference between the light and heavy crude is the carbon content. Governor Doyle's Global Warming bill requires Wisconsin to adopt a Low Carbon Fuel Standard (LCFS) if certain modest conditions are met which will likely ban or restrict the state's use of Canadian crude. According to analysis by the Marshall Institute, an LCFS would increase the price of gas by \$0.61 cents per gallon before taxes.

Governor Doyle's Global Warming bill calls for the implementation of the California Low Emission Vehicle (CA LEV) program in Wisconsin. Under this program, stringent regulations are placed on tailpipe emissions, fuel efficiency and the type of motor vehicles produced. The state's adoption of California Car standards would likely add nearly \$1,000 to the cost of each new car sold in Wisconsin.

These mandates, driving up the price of electricity, gas at the pump and a new car among others, could cost approximately \$20 billion at today's prices. This won't be paid by government, but by Wisconsin's working families and employers. Wisconsin's economy is highly dependent on manufacturing. Because the typical manufacturing process is energy intensive, these businesses need access to affordable energy. According to Beacon Hill Institute economist, these Global Warming Task Force recommendations would result in the loss of another 43,000 private sector jobs – mostly in the manufacturing sector, and primarily because of the bill's negative impact on energy prices.

Recently the State of Wisconsin announced that 163,000 jobs were lost in 2009. Losing more than another 43,000 existing jobs at a cost of about \$20 billion for the promise of 15,000 "green" jobs by 2025 is hardly a step in the right direction. There has to be better solutions to our problems.

Rep Phil Montgomery

8,284 Doesn't Sound Good, Try 44,000.

Cynical folks might think that politicians say what you want to hear instead of what the truth really is. On the issue of jobs and the federal stimulus bill the cynics would be right. The stimulus funneled billions of dollars into Wisconsin that was supposed to "create or save" jobs.

In October of last year, after \$680 million of direct spending Governor Doyle reported 8,284 jobs were created or saved. For those with calculators that is \$82,000 per job. Flash forward to January 2010, Governor Doyle and Democrats are now touting 44,000 jobs "created or retained".

How were 35,716 jobs created or retained during the same time nearly 30,000 jobs were lost in Wisconsin according to the Center on Wisconsin Strategy? The answer is simple. Politically, the original numbers didn't sound very good.

In the original report that the governor used to estimate 8,284 jobs, the White House estimated 22,100 were saved or created. In the latest January report, the White House estimated 44,000 jobs created or retained. The number of direct jobs in the same report which is the total the governor originally used was 8,964.

To be consistent with reporting, the governor should have said 680 jobs were created or saved by the stimulus in the last three months. That would have been an embarrassment to the Democrats and their 'job growth' plans, but it would not have been as misleading as using the speculative 44,000 number.

If state Democrats now want to use the White House numbers they need to preface the estimates with the fact that they are "speculative and uncertain" which is what the White House report said. As well, they need to say the White House no longer keeps a running tally on jobs created or saved. They are simply adding up all jobs impacted by stimulus dollars even if those employees were never in jeopardy of losing their jobs.

In other words, if a healthy business receives a stimulus funded grant for new energy efficient windows, all employees of that business would be considered as having their jobs saved. Common sense thinkers know that the stimulus did not save these jobs, they were not being cut in the first place.

The current political leadership has become politically invested in a failed policy. The Democrats are entrenched with the belief that the federal stimulus bill will solve our current jobs crisis. They also subscribe to the philosophy that government spending creates jobs. It is the other way around – government exists because of the hard working employees and employers of our state.

Regarding the stimulus there is no doubt that temporary government spending can subsidize some jobs for a time. But when the spending is over those jobs need to be funded with additional tax dollars they go away. Higher taxes and increased spending deter private sector growth. Taxes and spending do not create the economic growth needed to fund public budgets or encourage private sector job creation.

Instead of playing with the numbers to defend failed policies legislative leaders need to pass job creating proposals. A good place to start would be with repealing many of the onerous taxes passed this legislative session. Another place to look would be in the Wisconsin Jobs NOW Task Force recommendations.

I participated in the task force and believe that by adopting the recommendations, jobs would be created and employers would find Wisconsin a more attractive state to locate.

Rep John Nygren

State of the State.

Governor Doyle gave his final State of the State address. He did his best to shine a happy light on his two terms in office, but after eight years Governor Doyle will leave amid a cloud of disappointment and unpopularity. Wisconsin's unemployment rate has jumped from 8.2 percent in November of last year to 8.7 percent last month. This is unexpected and underscores the fact that actions in Madison are hurting the state's economy, not helping.

Under his administration government spending has increased by 32 percent and our GAAP deficit to over \$2.7 billion. The next governor will be greeted with a minimum \$2 billion deficit due to the frivolous spending and onerous taxes enacted by Governor Doyle and his Democrat allies in the legislature. Taxes and fees were raised by over \$5 billion last year alone.

The Pew Center on the States has labeled Wisconsin a state in 'fiscal peril' due in large part to the gap between government spending and state revenues. Years of spending gimmicks and segregated fund raids aimed at paying off special interest allies have left each and every Wisconsinite with \$445 worth of debt - the highest per capita deficit in the nation.

In the last two years Wisconsin has lost one-eighth of our manufacturing workforce; the backbone of our state, and 176,700 jobs. Companies like Briggs and Stratton, Harley Davidson, and Thomas Industries cut hundreds of jobs and some have left Wisconsin completely, due largely to our high taxes and work environment.

In his State of the State address, the governor's answers to our state's troubles are to increase family's energy bills, increase property taxes, and to increase your health insurance premiums. The energy bill he is proposing is estimated to kill over 43,000 Wisconsin jobs and will increase a family's utility bill by thousands annually. The education proposals the governor laid out will increase property taxes in order to comply with unfunded government mandates on our local schools. The governor is also proposing health insurance reforms that will add to the growing insolvency of our state's Medicaid programs - programs that have grown by 174 percent since 1998 - due in large part to reckless and under funded expansions by Governor Doyle and his administration.

I believe the strength of our economy is in the employees and entrepreneurs of our state, not from Madison mandates and spending. By putting the money and opportunity back into the hands of our families, local communities, and businesses we will break free of this current economic stagnation and chart a better path for our and our children's futures.

Rep. John Nygren

"It is well enough that the people of this nation do not understand our banking and monetary system, for if they did, I believe there would be a revolution before tomorrow morning."
... **Henry Ford**

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

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

"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**

Accounting Principles.

According to a report released by the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance, the generally accepted accounting principles state deficit for the 2008-09 fiscal year hit \$2.71 billion. This figure was calculated using data from the 2008-2009 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report published in December by the Wisconsin Dept. of Administration.

Generally accepted accounting principles (often referred to as GAAP) are standards accountants use while calculating the financial statements of businesses and non-profit organizations. These standards are widely followed to maintain integrity in budgeting. Publicly traded companies are required to use generally accepted accounting principles by the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Instead of using generally accepted accounting principles, Wisconsin's state government calculates its finances using month to month revenues and expenditures. This less stringent type of accounting ignores future obligations and covers up spending gimmicks used to balance bloated government spending.

For example, imagine two families purchasing a refrigerator during a "no money down, no payment and no interest for 2 years" sale. The 1st family uses generally accepted accounting principles, which will add the cost for the refrigerator to their monthly budget from the day of purchase until the payment's due date. However, the 2nd family uses month to month current expenses budgeting. Their failure to account for the purchase will result in not having the means to pay for the refrigerator when the payment is due.

Wisconsin is much like the 2nd family which failed to address its impeding debt. In the current budget, the state purchased \$2.71 billion of goods and services with no means to pay for them when their bills come due. Thus, the state's structural deficit continues to grow into the future.

Since Governor Doyle took office, government spending has increased 32%; from \$47.1 billion to \$62.2 billion in the latest biennial budget. In fact, despite experiencing the worse recession in 30 years, spending increased over 6% in the current budget alone.

To break our debt down, according to the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance, the state's generally accepted accounting principles deficit is \$445 per person. In other words, Wisconsin has the highest structural deficit per capita in the nation.

Businesses use generally accepted accounting principles to ensure their solvency. It's time for Wisconsin's government to do the same. Bills have been proposed in the Legislature requiring the preparation and passage of biennial state budgets using generally accepted accounting principles.

If Wisconsin is to chart a financially sustainable path, we must be honest in our budgeting and get spending under control. To not do so will burden our children with an unsustainable amount of debt. Respectfully,
Representative Kevin Peter-

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Things That Make Us Wonder.

THIS IS ELECTION REFORM?

It was nice to hear that with an extremely important fall election this year with the likelihood of a record amount of negative TV advertising the state senate actually passed a bill requiring special interest groups to disclose the names of their donors. One small step in cleaning up political campaign contributions.

Forget about it. At about the same time U.S. Supreme Court voted in favor of removing of restrictions on corporations and interest groups limiting the amounts they could contribute to political candidates. While the implications of this ruling will have to be sorted out, it appears that more money than ever will be spent by special interests to put their people in office. Quite likely it will give lobbyists more clout when dealing with incumbents.

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THE GOVERNMENT'S COMPUTERS.

President Obama's federal business manager, Peter Orszag claims the reason government is inefficient and ineffective is because their computers are outdated. Their employees have better computers at home.

This may be true but who's fault is it? Most people at home simply update their equipment as their needs dictate and technology improves. Same with most private industry.

We have observed that government, rather than finding what technology can do for them and incorporate it to their needs try to go the other way around by developing systems and programs which aren't feasible or even possible. By the time they get something to work they have spent millions upon millions of dollars but what they get is already outdated. How much has the State of Wisconsin wasted on systems that still don't work?

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SETTING AN EXAMPLE – PART #1

The City of Milwaukee bought some new uniforms for it's police force. However when they arrived, they were disappointed to find they were manufactured in China. Unfortunately this is a problem with a lot of merchandise we buy today. In many cases it is not a matter of price or quality as much as it is of showing a little

more loyalty to preserving jobs in this country. We still consume enough merchandise to keep China and much of the rest of the world busy without compromising the reputations of established brand names formerly made in the USA.

Let's hope the day doesn't come when we pick up a roll of Charmin and find it was made in China.

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SETTING AN EXAMPLE – PART #2

The NFL has brought suit to protect it's exclusive marketing rights on logo merchandise. Per the previous item, it would seem appropriate if they would stipulate that all merchandise representing their great American institution and purchased by their loyal fans be manufactured in the United States of America.

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1933 AND. 2010 COMPARED.

Despite dumping billions upon billions of future taxpayer dollars into ill-conceived stimulus plans touted to reduce unemployment, the results have been another big government basket case. It easily qualifies as the grandfather of Pork Barrel handouts of government money. The largest waste of money in the nations history.

The formula being used seems to be allocating huge sums at political discretion to various locations to build libraries, roads, and other seemingly worthwhile projects with the intent that the money would trickle down through the economy. It doesn't necessarily work that way as the main beneficiaries are likely highly paid contractors not likely to hire the average unemployed factory or office worker.

Mr. Obama's idol, FDR, used a somewhat different approach which worked the other way around. To reduce the 25% unemployment rate when he took office, he simply gave the unemployed and able bodied a shovel and sent them to work for a minimum wage working for contractors around the country.

While we would not endorse this solution now and realize things are different than in 1933, the country did come out of the depression with a lot of highways, dams, bridges, national parks and conservation projects at an affordable cost.

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HOW THE STATE SAVES MONEY.

Gov. Doyle, in his efforts to reduce the state deficit has ordered all state employees to take unpaid furlough pay. This in-

cludes the states District Attorneys, their assistants and staff who are considered state employees. The governor had already cut their budget as part of the state budget.

Problem is the governor's budget also included a myriad of new laws and provisions which consequently would greatly increase the workload of these individuals. The ultimate cost to taxpayers for court delays, jail time, trial expenses, etc., could be far greater than the savings.

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ATTORNEYS GET THEIR SHARE.

The City of Green Bay has accrued over \$1.13 Million legal fees for various lawsuits during the last five years, including that of Alderman Vander Leest.

We realize that the two sides to every question often end up in court for attorneys to decide but sometimes a simple "I'm sorry", "I can understand the mistake and apologize", or "let's forget about it" can save a lot of money and frustration.

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BANKS ARE WHERE THE MONEY IS.

Citing the large bonuses banks have given their executives, President Obama has proposed a tax on "large" banks in an effort to recoup some of the bailout money the government so hurriedly gave them last year.

If this bailout did any good or was necessary is difficult for the average person to determine. What we do know is through mergers and buyouts there are not many "large" banks left in the country, and from what we hear many of the small ones are in trouble also. Federal meddling in the banking industry is being blamed for problems in the housing market, the stock market, and small business credit. Is anybody in charge of this mess?

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TAX PREPARERS NEED SCHOOLING.

The IRS has announced that they plan on requiring all independent tax-return preparers to take exams and be registered. Unfortunately, despite claims to the contrary, it has become more difficult for individuals to complete their own returns due to the many complicated credits and deductions which are offered. In Wisconsin it is necessary to complete both a state and federal return which are different in several ways.

The net effect of this will probably mean fewer registered tax preparers at a higher cost in order to comply with govern-

ment regulations that keep getting more complicated as time goes on. Phooey!

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IF YOU DON'T LIKE IT: LEAVE.

A recent *USA Today* article cited a survey that 55% of Americans were dissatisfied with their jobs for some reason or other. No surprise, most people gripe about the boss, or the fact they have to work each day. However, this amount was not significantly different from a similar survey from 1987. I am sure that if you took the people who probably have worse jobs than the ones who are dissatisfied, plus the unemployed and those looking for their first jobs you would have no trouble replacing the 55% assuming they seriously wanted to leave.

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KIDS NOW INSURED UNTIL AGE 27.

Why does the Wisconsin Legislature keep tinkering with insurance benefits and then keep wondering why rates keep going up? The latest is a law effective Jan. 1, allowing young adults to remain on their parents health insurance policy until age 27, rather than 21, as previous. While this benefit no doubt will be welcomed by some, it will also mean an increase in group insurance rates.

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NEWS FROM WASHINGTON.

Never in the history of the U.S. Congress and Senate have so many procedural corners been cut, accounting tricks played, or sweetheart deals arranged to pass legislation unpopular with the public as the Obama Health Care Reform Bill.

No doubt we haven't heard the last of it, or just exactly how they propose to finance this monster.

* * * * *

ENOUGH LAWS ALREADY.

The Wisconsin Legislature has declared it illegal to drive an automobile while texting and providing fines up to \$800.

While this is both sensible and proper, there are already dozens of laws in the books prohibiting driving while distracted, engaged in other activities, or otherwise occupies so as to interfere with the safe driving off a vehicle.

Is texting that much different than taking pictures from the window, tuning the radio or using a cell phone while driving? Is an activity legal unless it is covered in the stat-

utes? Do we need a specific law for every distraction, or can we enforce what we already have?

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THE RIVER THAT FLOWS BACKWARD.

The Chicago River has been blamed for everything from draining and lowering the level of Lake Michigan to allowing Asian Carp and other undesirable species to migrate into the Great Lakes,

A recent *Chicago Tribune* article discloses that the Chicago sewage facility does not fully disinfect wastewater dumped back in the river; by design. Among other excuses they claim a little bacteria is good for the atmosphere, and the cost of getting the water 100% pure would be prohibitive.

Maybe it would be best for all concerned if they just filled the thing with dirt.

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STAND UP AND BE COUNTED.

Uncle Sam is getting ready for the 2010 Census, and will hire 800,000 part time employees to make sure the job gets done right. Most people can furnish information by mail, but census workers can visit your residence if you do not respond.

People have been cautioned about individuals posing as census takers so be sure what they ask is legitimate. Also, you are not required to furnish them with a Social Security number, which will probably make it impossible to ferret out and identify illegal aliens in our midst's.

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THE DNR REALLY CARES.

The Wisconsin DNR in their desire to make this a cleaner world to live in often imposes mandates difficult and expensive to comply with.

Examples are the requirement that municipalities reduce runoffs of water to lakes and rivers by constructing elaborate systems of storm sewers and water retention ponds. Green Bay was forced to abandon 50 of 70 proposed projects simply because they were not cost effective.

Other municipalities have similar problems, usually due to cost and logistics. Another set of mandates requires municipalities inspect residences every 20 years for compliance with state standards including outside faucet fittings which prevent back flow into the water system. The Village of Allouez for one is considering several options to comply with these mandates without adding to water bills or property taxes.

* * * * *

PUBLIC VS. PRIVATE PAY.

The differences between public and private employee compensation is always a matter of discussion when state and local budgets are presented.

The Cato Institute prepared a study claiming the total compensation per hour in the public sector to be \$39.66 and hour only \$27.42 in the private sector. The biggest differences were in the form of benefits, with public employees receiving an average of \$4.34 per hour for health insurance benefits and \$2.85 per hour for pension plans while private employees paid \$1.99 and \$.41 for these benefits. We acknowledge there are exceptions..

* * * * *

A TRAIN TO NOWHERE.

Governor Doyle has proudly announced a \$800+ million federal grant to build a high-speed rail line between Milwaukee and Madison. We can guess it will cost much more than that before it is ever completed. At the same time proponents are looking for ways to fund improvements to provide local passenger service in the Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee corridor.

While there may be some need for these projects, updating a system that was largely abandoned 50 years ago and replaced with urban sprawl by trains going 110 miles per hour may end up costing far more than it is worth. What do you think?

* * * * *

CAN WE AFFORD IT NOW?

Finally, despite all the things going on, Wisconsin residents suffered 30,624 foreclosures during 2009, 20% over 2008, and 31.5% more bankruptcy filings during the same period. Unemployment has ranged from 8 to 10% with little signs of tangible improvement in the near future.

This does not seem to be the proper time for our elected officials to be out looking for ways to spend more money.

As usual, lots if things to wonder about.

Jim Frink - Editor

"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. Comments or suggestions are welcome to include in this section of the "TAX TIMES."

The TAX TIMES

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BCTA Meeting and Events Schedule – MARK YOUR CALENDARS.

Tuesday - February 16, 2010. Local primary elections. Be Sure to Vote!

Thursday – February 18, 2010. BCTA Monthly Meeting, 12:00 Noon.

Titletown Brewing Co., "Frost Room."

Speaker – Former Congressman Mark Neumann.

Candidate for Wisconsin Governor. Note: Please plan on attending this important meeting. In order to accommodate everyone, we will have extra chairs available for those not eating lunch.

Thursday – March 18, 2010. BCTA Monthly Meeting, 12:00 Noon.

Titletown Brewing Co., "Frost Room."

Scheduled Speaker – Dr. Marc Trager, 8th Congressional Candidate.

Tuesday – April 6, 2010. General Spring Election. Be Sure to Vote!

Thursday – April 15, 2010. 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.



February,

2010



"We can't treat tax dollars like Monopoly Money." . . . **Barock Obama**
"We can evade reality, but we cannot evade the consequences of evading reality." . . . **Ayn Rand**
"A fool and his money are soon elected." . . . **Will Rogers**

SUPPORT THE BCTA

**New Members are Always Welcome. Call 336-6410
Write us at P. O. Box 684
or visit our website**

**www.BCTaxpayers.Org
for Details.**