



Extreme Home Idol.

I got a great new reality show. A cross between American Idol and Extreme Makeover. In my show, the nasty local Tax Assessor named Simon Says, bluntly and with finality declares your homes worth. Then his partner and Tax Collector, Simon Pays, applies the hammer, the going mill rate and you write the check.

Now, my favorite part of this scene is the mental chatter as "Simon Says" fumbles about your humble abode, his inner voice will expose his methinks methodology. I know, most of you think they make up some of this stuff cuz they can, just pull numbers out of thin air, like they've been smoking the neighbor's front lawn, a variety named Kentuck Bent Blue, a cross between Kentucky Bluegrass, Featherbed Bent and California Sensimilla.

LOL, I'm a late 60's UW Madison throwback, I Loved the movie "Caddyshack," and as Chevy Chase found out, Spackler Bent is "a little harsh" when smoked. So it's no wonder "Simon Says" is bone crushing knarly in his valuation assessments, a parallel to the original American Idol host, Simon, so spectacularly brutal they gave him his own show.

Now, I've still got both feet in the residential mortgage business, and at times I wonder if I've been inhaling near the neighbor's smoking lawn. In past years I actually felt good putting a qualified applicant into their first home, knowing the kids could live safely in a home their family owned. But as home values crested the hill circa 2006-07, like the roller coaster riders, all they could see was sky for a moment. Then came 2008-9, and homeowners, to their dismay, began to see the ground rushing toward them. The drop was not thrilling, no Zippin-Pippin rush, home owners did not throw their hands in the air and shout with glee. How much of the fat years do you think Simon will find in your home value?

Here's our take on things, my office mates and me, a quick and dirty formula based on our accumulated 100+ years experience with Simon. If your home was higher end, say \$350-600K, lop off as much as 35-40%. Simon sent them home crying, because ain't nobody coming up with that much cash, aside from certain local Millionaire and Billionaires [POTUS-defined] who need to move or can afford a really good bargain. Then the mid-range, \$200-\$325K, might bleed out at 25-35%, depending on location, location, location. Those who fared the best (in our immediate area only) were probably upper-low-enders, the \$100-195K range, who only lost 10-20% of their equity, at least some got to keep their houses. The low-enders-- \$70-125K --, are the biggest foreclosure group; they might have suffered the same losses as the high-enders if it were not for the Big B -- Bankruptcy.

Now, this is just our grizzled and sagely guestimate at local equity losses, but who knows what the Simons will say? Not just a few disgruntled contestants may be marching down to their municipal Open-Book to question Simon's proclamations; we'll re-print "the how-to for challenging Simon Says- God help us. These assessments are supposed to be based on 3-year rolling averages, so nobody drops off a cliff, so this year's assessment should be based on 2010, 2009, 2008 comparable sales info, 2 high years, and 1 lower or worse, so what constitutes "comparable" is in the eye of the beholder. Next year will be who-flung-the-dung unless the formula is re-jiggered. I fully expect a significant mill rate increase, as God knows government can not do with less money.

Since government only reacts after the dung been flung and apparently our paltry dimes and nickels don't buy us pro-activity, so per usual, any government attempts at fairness will be in proportion to the avoirdupois of dung that gets flung. The time is as ripe as a luscious orange persimmon, for a California Prop 13-style tax revolt, not that California is a model for fiscal finesse, as Enron scapegoat Gray Davis discovered to his infinite chagrin. But the Prop 13 citizen activism is a model for developing a **Real** basis of property valuation, as long as the State remains committed to collecting the bulk of its bang-less bucks from Real Estate. Any attempt to turn away from this model will probably result in a VAT (point of purchase tax), which are extremely regressive if it is the sole or largest tax.

Maybe it's time to come up with some rapscaillion hybrid combo tax, like Carl Spackler Bent, which we all should be growing to offer Simon Says when Extreme Home Idol shows up at your castle.

Richard Parins — President

The BROWN COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION
In our 27th Year of Promoting Fiscal Responsibility in Government.

January Meeting Notes. Room Tax Increase Discussed

Monthly Brown County Taxpayers Association meeting January 19, 2012 at Titledown Brewing Co.

Brad Toll of the Greater Green Bay Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB), Mike Aubinger, President of the Village of Ashwaubenon, and Ron Antonneau, Wisconsin Public Service Corporation Government Relations Director, spoke in favor of increasing the community's room tax from 8% to 10%, with 100% of this increase directed to the Greater Green Bay Convention & Visitors Bureau to be used for marketing and promoting tourism. This proposal is supported by the Greater Green Bay Area Lodging Association and the Brown County Restaurant Association. The Villages of Ashwaubenon, Bellevue, Howard, and Allouez have also stated support.

Mr. Toll explained that the CVB is a nationally accredited Destination Marketing Organization. He stated that its mission is to market to out of town visitors, advocate for visitor needs, link visitors to its partners, and generate business and tax revenue by importing "portable taxpayers (out of county visitors)." The CVB targets leisure visitors, convention and meeting delegates, sports athletes and fans, and group tours. There are 4,300 hotel rooms in the area. Sports tournaments are a necessity to fill those hotel rooms. The CVB markets tourism with a wide range of activities, including tradeshow, direct mail, electronic marketing, and the Visitor Information Center.

Mr. Toll cited a 2010 impact study that indicated tourism spending in Brown County is almost \$500,000,000 per year and accounts for about 8,000 full-time jobs. He noted that the CVB's direct marketing for tourism is substantially underfunded compared to other Wisconsin tourist destinations. Currently, the room tax collected is used to pay off bonding for the KI Center and the Resch Center as well as covering administrative costs of collecting the tax. The proposed solution is to increase the room tax by 2% and dedicate those dollars to CVB marketing efforts. Responding to a question, Mr. Toll stated that the return on CVB marketing dollars is about 12:1.

The Schools Committee reported they are continuing to pursue the appropriateness of Fund 80 expenditures.

The State/Federal Committee reported that citizens can track specific legislation by signing up for the Wisconsin Legislative Notification Service at <http://notifv.legis.wisconsin.gov/asp>. The next BCTA meeting is scheduled for Thursday, Feb. 16. at Titledown Brewing Co. Featured will be a presentation by the Green Bay Metropolitan Sewage District regarding a proposal to construct a \$147 Million upgrade to their facilities. Our speaker for March will be 8th District U. S. Congressman Reid Ribble. Details on the back page of this Tax Times.

Dave Nelson—Secretary

Plan on Attending Coming Meetings.

We have outstanding programs of interest lined up for our February and March BCTA meetings. On Feb. 16, representatives from the Green Bay Metropolitan Sewage District will present plans for their expansion and updating project, and on March 15, our Congressman Reib Ribble will update us on what is or isn't going on in Washington. Mark your calendars and plan on attending. We will plan on a good attendance at these meetings and will use the 2d floor meeting room at Titledown. and suggest you try to arrive early so we can get going on time. Thank you.

Just A Thought.

Additional seating at Lambeau Field along with reduced stadium parking due to security barriers and additional construction around the stadium have increased the congestion and walking distances for fans attending Packer games. Stadium workers and people just wanting to be in the area on game days also complicate the problem.

Free bus rides were a good idea and probably helped some even though they carried only a small percentage of fans. Many of the Green Bay buses are small and no-one makes money if the rides are free or even subsidized.

We note that there are numerous large parking lots such as NWTC, shopping centers and the downtown ramps being largely empty during game days. There are also dozens of large, unused school buses available at the same time. Has anyone ever seriously considered establishing a continuous shuttle service between these empty lots and Lambeau Field? Start a couple of hours before and after the games between the lots and a specified area near the stadium.

A round trip ticket from a convenient to reach parking space and the front gate of Lambeau should be worth \$10-20 of anyone's money considering the alternatives of paying \$25-35 to park near the stadium or walking 10 or more blocks. The charge would have to be sufficient to cover bus expenses, possibly rent for use of the lots, and also necessary security and cleanup expenses.

It could be a win, win, win situation as a source of revenue for the bus companies, rent for the newly utilized parking places, and a better way to get to the game for those in no mood to walk miles and put up with the traffic before and after the game. Just a thought. JF

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

E-Mail BCTA@ExecPC.Com.

"The inherent vice of capitalism is the unequal sharing of blessings; the inherent virtue of socialism is the equal sharing of miseries." . . . Winston Churchill

"When a thing is funny,, search it carefully for a hidden truth." . . . George Bernard Shaw

"Wisdom is a quality seldom acquired until well after it is needed most." . . . Doug Larson

VISIT OUR WEBSITE
www.BCTAxpayers.Org
EMail, BCTA@ExecPc.Com

How Does the Government Spend Your Money?

The proposed Federal Budget for 2012 calls for spending \$3.7 Trillion. While it was the intent of this article to illustrate how your personal tax dollars are applied, and give you an idea of how much the government spends on various programs, a complication arose. Federal revenue in the year 2010 was about \$2.2 Trillion. Due somewhat to the economy, there is no reason to assume there will be any substantial increase in revenue this year. The balance will likely be added to the National Debt for future generations to worry about.

In other words, out of \$10,000 of spending, only about two thirds will come from your tax dollars and the balance will have to be borrowed and added to the credit card account with ever increasing interest payments. If my math is correct, if you multiply the numbers in the table by 370,000, you will have an idea how much the budget for a certain item actually is.

As with any government spending budget, they are really not written for anyone to understand. Expenditures can be skillfully hidden, or otherwise leave a trail that is difficult to follow. In any event, you can see that determining where to cut expenses can be a challenge. No doubt there are some programs worthy of expansion and others no one would miss if eliminated. The final entry, \$1,819.08 for "all other programs", actually equates to over \$670 Billion in spending too small to itemize. It is no wonder that our representatives have no respect for fiscal responsibility and can always find a way to reward the folks back home with a little pork barrel spending. **Jim Frink—BCTA**

National Debt Update.

At the end of January, the U. S. National Debt reached a total of **\$15,294,286,432,109.50**. That's \$15.29 Trillion give or take a few Billion and \$124 Billion more than at the beginning of the month, and going up at the rate of about \$2 Million every minute of the day and night.

Add to that another \$56.3 Trillion in state, local, and personal debt along with about \$117.3 Trillion in unfunded liabilities for Social Security, Prescription drugs and Medicare and you're talking big money.

All of the small business, corporate, and personal assets in the country are estimated to be worth \$77.15 Trillion so all in all it's not a pretty balance sheet. **Jim Frink—BCTA**

Ribble Statement Against \$1.2 trillion debt increase.

Representative Reid Ribble (WI-08) released the following statement on his vote for H.J.Res 98, the Debt Limit Increase Disapproval Resolution. This legislation expresses Congress's disapproval of an increase in the debt limit of \$1.2 trillion.

"Over the past few months, the House has stepped up to the plate and taken action to confront the debt," said Ribble. "We worked with members from both parties and both chambers to reach a deal that would begin to address the mounting debt and start the process of restoring fiscal soundness to our country. However, just months later, in the wake of the supercommittee's failure to arrive at an agreement, there is already talk of weakening the sequestration triggers established in the Budget Control Act. This not only undermines what Congress voted into law, but could also put our government even deeper into debt.

"Since the conditions and limits of the Budget Control Act are now potentially being 'reexamined' in an attempt to prevent necessary spending cuts from being enacted, I cannot support another debt limit increase.

Instead of facing the debt head on and making tough decisions, the federal government appears once again to be taking the easy way out and ignoring the problem. Continuing to spend money that we don't have is not a viable, long-term solution. We owe it to our children and grandchildren to tackle our country's overwhelming debt now before it becomes their burden to bear."

(Rep. Ribble is scheduled to address the March 15 BCTA meeting. See back page of this Tax Times for details and plan on attending.)

Where each \$10,000 of Spending Goes.

Social Security	\$ 1,926.46
Medicare	1,208.43
Medicaid	713.24
National Debt Interest	531.55
Iraq/Afghanistan Military	509.10
TARP	429.65
Iraq/Afghanistan Operations	414.27
Military Personnel	357.09
Military Weapon Purchases	286.77
Military Research/Testing	225.67
Food Stamps	153.81
CIA	141.56
Veteran's Benefits	138.73
Federal Highways	118.31
VA Health Care	114.22
Health Care Research (NIH)	85.55
Foreign Aid	85.33
Low Income Education Funding	70.70
Department of Energy	68.07
Housing Subsidies for the poor	66.30
Military Retirement Benefits	60.38
Pell Grants/Low Inc.Col/Stdnt	55.09
NASA Space Program	50.54
Border Security/Immigration	44.72
Internal Revenue Service	32.75
Agriculture Subsidies	32.44
Coast Guard	26.51
Environmental Cleanup (EPA)	21.61
FBI	20.86
Head Start	20.21
FEMA	19.90
Public Housing	19.45
Center for Disease Control	18.07
Federal Prisons	17.54
Other Military	16.46
Airport Security	14.30
Oceanic and Atmos. Admin.	12.66
Census Bureau	8.92
National Parks	7.90
FDA	5.86
Drug Enforcement Adm.	5.82
Patent and Trademark Office	5.40
Homeless Assistance	4.76
Amtrak	4.12
ATF	3.00
U.S. Marshall Serice	2.72
Smithsonian Institution	2.07
Bureau of Labor Statistics	1.70
Congress Salaries/Benefits	0.35
Sub-Total	\$ 8,180.92
All Other Programs	1,819.08
TOTAL	\$ 10,000.00

Brown County Taxpayers Association.

Source: The Tax Policy Center, 2009 Fed. Spending

State in Good Position for Growth.

As the economy and jobs remain the number one issue on most people's minds, it's important to reflect on last year's accomplishments and look forward to what lies ahead in 2012.

Although job growth wasn't as strong as we'd all hoped in 2011, the state did see private sector employment gains and I'm confident we are on the right path. The creation of thousands of jobs last year is notable considering over 150,000 Wisconsin workers lost their jobs during the previous three years under the Doyle Administration. It takes time to turn around an economy that was hampered by state overregulation, high taxation, and reckless spending.

With the legislative reforms we put in place last year there is great optimism for 2012. In a recent survey by the Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce, 94% of Wisconsin business owners said our state is headed in the right direction, proof that job-creators are encouraged by our efforts.

Here are the primary reasons for their confidence and why Wisconsin families should expect a more prosperous 2012. The state is in good fiscal shape heading into 2012 due to the balanced budget we passed last July. Families know you can't spend more than you take in and that's the mindset we had throughout the budgeting process; A much-needed return to honest budgeting, we put forth a responsible spending plan and avoided mass layoffs. While other states are drowning in debt, Wisconsin is projected to have a surplus at the end of the budget cycle.

The anti-business policies of the Doyle Administration have been replaced with pro-business, pro-jobs reforms that will drive job growth in 2012. Among the accomplishments this session have been efforts to improve the state's litigation climate through tort reform. We also passed sensible reforms aimed at streamlining the regulatory process and eliminating bureaucratic red tape. To that end, under new leadership the DNR is now willing to work with businesses, not against them, to help guide them through the regulatory process. There is also great potential for growth in Northern Wisconsin as improvements to the mining permitting process will allow for mining development and the creation of thousands of good, family-supporting jobs. We can streamline the process without putting at risk essential environmental protections.

In 2012, strong economic growth is expected as more businesses invest in our state and expand their operations. Aiding them will be the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC), created by the legislature last year. WEDC has been, and will continue to be instrumental in attracting and retaining new businesses by helping them gain access to capital and loans. WEDC tax credits will incentivize investments in our workforce, while holding employers accountable for job-creation results. Additionally, steps have been taken to enhance worker training in order to ensure we have a highly skilled, prepared workforce for 2012 and beyond.

Finally, we have held the line on tax increases, allowing folks to put more of their hard-earned money back into the economy and job-creators to reinvest earnings into their facilities and labor force. Our efforts to lower the tax burden will continue to benefit Wisconsin seniors, working families, employers and our economy as a whole this new year.

There's no doubt the national economy will play a critical role in how well the citizens of Wisconsin fare in 2012. However, regardless of what takes place in Washington D.C. and on Wall Street, we're confident the Badger State will make great strides and solidify our standing as a national leader in economic recovery. We are proud of the foundation laid last year, but realize there is still work to do in order to sustain unyielding economic growth and prosperity for working families. We remain committed to moving our state in the right direction and look forward to a great 2012.

Representative John Nygren

Why Wisconsin Is On The Right Track *Balancing the Budget Without Raising Taxes is Good For The State.*

When Governor Walker gave his State of the State address, he highlighted where we as a State have gone in the last year; mainly closing a 3.6 Billion budget deficit without raising taxes, and improving our business climate to produce a favorable environment for job creation. Continued government overspending has caused Illinois to raise their taxes dramatically and that isn't solving their fiscal problems.

Greece is much worse . . . Athens isn't exactly next door. Why should we care about what happened there? The economic situation in Athens is a good warning about the dangers of overspending and higher taxes. At some point, you run out of other people's money. At some point the socialist welfare state goes broke.

How would you like a 67% increase in your state tax bill? Facing a budget crisis in 2011, Illinois raised individual income taxes by 67% and business taxes by 46%. The result backfired. The higher taxes caused businesses to flee the state, putting further pressure on the \$6.8 Billion of unpaid bills. The state dropped to almost last place (48th) in Chief Executive Magazine's ranking of business climates by state, and Moody's dropped the state credit rating. That's what happened to our neighbor to the south, Illinois.

In contrast to Greece and Illinois, we in Wisconsin tackled our situation as quickly and as prudently as possible. As a result Wisconsin jumped from 41st to 17th in that same business climate poll. Rather than giving Wisconsin a credit downgrade, Moody's praised our budget as redit positive for Wisconsin, and added that the money-saving reforms bring the state's finances closer to a structural budget balance.

I wonder what plan those who wish to recall Governor Walker prefer. My guess is they want to take us down the same path as Illinois and Athens. Higher taxes didn't work in Europe; higher taxes didn't work in Illinois, and higher taxes won't work in Wisconsin.

Higher taxes don't work for a couple of reasons. First, higher taxes encourage more government spending, this doesn't fix the problem. Second, higher taxes take money out of people's pockets for government spending and increase the cost of goods and services. This has negative consequences for a state or country's economy.

We made the right choice in Wisconsin by balancing our budget without raising taxes. We need to stay the course and continue to resist efforts to increase spending and taxes. Resist the urge to go back to multi-billion deficits, fund raids and unpaid bills.

Forward Wisconsin! **State Senator Frank Lasee**

Time and money spent in helping men do more for themselves is far better than mere giving."

. . . Henry Ford

"We have staked the whole of all our political institutions upon the capacity of mankind for self-government, upon the capability of each and all of us to govern ourselves, to control ourselves, to sustain ourselves according to The Ten Commandments of God."

. . . James Madison

(Sometimes called the father of the U.S. Constitution.)

Things That Make Us Wonder.

The Internet is a most useful and convenient tool for gathering and exchanging information. For many if not most of us using it is a big part of our daily routine.

This being an election year we are finding it is also a widely used tool to create favorable or unfavorable public opinion about the various candidates for public office. We are not talking so much about the candidates or his parties own websites which pretty much address their materials to select lists, or to reliable organizations with a reputation for dispensing straight forward honest and reliable information.

We all have our convictions and beliefs, and like to hear what we want to hear be it over the internet or the daily news. Problem is, a lot of stuff over the internet is from anonymous sources, and planted with full knowledge that it will quickly spread like wildfire if it sounds like something that was not previously publicized.

This does not mean you should believe everything you read in the papers or hear on TV. However you should definitely determine the character of people running for high office, have your own set of values you want them to represent, and pay close attention to the source of what you hear about them as well as the content.

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The Penokee Iron Ore range in Ashland and Iron Counties of Wisconsin is estimated to contain 2.2 billion tons of ore in a 22 mile long deposit. Developers see it as a resource to satisfy industrial demand, the state probably sees it as a source of employment and income at a time when the economy badly needs it, and environmentalists see it as the end of the world as we know it.

Presently the Legislature is working on rules to satisfy everyone's interests if development is to proceed. Also under consideration is the development of copper deposits in Wisconsin. Iron and copper use different methods to extract with potential damage to ground water and atmospheric damage which will have to be regulated somehow. One consideration is that the cost of development would be paid by the mining interests rather than asking for state funding.

Whatever happens, it's unlikely everyone will be happy.

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Preliminary costs of a recall election of Gov. Walker and others have been estimated at \$9 Million, and could be double if primary elections are necessary.

No matter what the outcome this cost either represents money that could have been spent elsewhere, or have to be raised through taxes and fees. It is unlikely such items are covered in the budget.

Also, no matter what happens next it appears the days of cooperative bipartisan government in Wisconsin will definitely be a thing of the past.

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There has been a lot of criticism of Wisconsin's photo ID to vote law. It may be an expense to administer and discourage some people from voting.

It was brought about due to numerous incidents in the state of fraudulent voting which in some cases effected the outcomes of elections.

It is not a unique law designed to harass the voters of Wisconsin. So far over 30 states have passed laws requiring some form of ID to vote and more are considering such legislation.

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Citing the fact that Republicans in Congress proposed a 60 day deadline for him to make up his mind on environmental issues, President Obama decided to delay approval of a new pipeline to bring crude oil in from Canada.

Wikipedia lists about 60 existing natural gas and petroleum pipelines traversing 2 or more states, many 30 years or more old. The president must believe that gasoline comes from gas stations just like that. While there is no question that many concerns have to be dealt with in the construction of any pipeline, they are still probably the fastest, safest and cheapest way to do the job. Also the pipelines would be built with private money without "stimulus help", and put a lot of people to work.

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While Wisconsin and the 49 other states have all been taking drastic and sometimes unpopular moves to reduce their employee expenses, we don't hear much about anything being done on the federal level. Maybe that's where our attention should be focused.

Does anyone actually know how many federal employees there actually

are, and how closely their costs are controlled by department budgets?

A 2009 report by the Cato Institute reported that federal civilian workers had an average salary of \$81,258 while private sector workers averaged \$50,462. However after factoring in benefits the federal pay totaled \$123,849 while the private sector averaged \$61,851. A difference of 100%.

While it is difficult to compare jobs or the qualifications required the big difference is that in the private sector every single employee has a role in making a profit for his or her employer while in government the focus may be more on making work to justify your job.

In any event, reports are that the total number of federal employees and payroll has grown dramatically in recent years.

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President Obama talks about making a leaner and more efficient government, but so far it's just talk. One area where they actually have been making cuts and trying to save money in with the Internal Revenue Service. While in most scenarios IRS agents are feared and unwelcome, they can perform a valuable service to both the government and taxpayers.

The first thing to remember is that in most cases, if you make income, you owe taxes accordingly. If you make income and try to hide it, you may be in trouble. You are also making your neighbor pay more tax to make up for the difference.

The tax laws of this country are a disorganized mess. In 2010 alone there were 579 changes in the code which now takes 80,000 pages at last count to print. These changes are usually dreamed up and authorized by Congress but it takes the IRS to enforce and explain them to people.

A low estimate is that at least \$300 Billion in taxes is lost each year due to tax evasion. Much of the focus of IRS agents is on employers who do not submit income and social security taxes withheld from their employees.

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Perhaps more than ever in recent years whenever a vacancy occurs in the Supreme Court, or any court of law for that matter politics takes precedence over the candidates background in the final decision. The last state supreme court election in Wisconsin set a record for spending.

This brings up the subject which

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has been a question in Wisconsin for years is why are elections for county office still held on party lines? A sheriff is supposed to uphold the law regardless of political affiliation, the district attorney is supposed to enforce the law and the treasurer collects the money on a non-partisan basis.

We elect our representatives to the Legislature and Congress according to our political beliefs but is there a Democratic or Republican way of arresting a speeder or prosecuting a murderer?

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It seems that every year about this time counties and municipalities start complaining about running out of money for snow removal and funds have to be shifted from other accounts.

So far this has been a mild winter, so we will see what happens if any snow removal funds are left over.

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An article in *USA Today* claimed that Pres. Obama already has amassed a total of \$240 for his re-election campaign. Looking at what all of the crucial Congressional state and local races will cost later on this year it's no wonder no one really seems concerned with the National Debt or the value of money.

Many of the races may be muddied by the Supreme Court ruling allowing unlimited contributions to PAC's by corporations. Although still not an allowable tax deductible expense and certain disclosure clauses will apply it will certainly be good news for ad agencies and TV stations.

We hear that some candidates do not welcome some ads by PAC's on their behalf without their control due to their negative nature, but we are sure they all know what is going on. This years elections promise to be interesting to say the least.

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When we see angry mobs interrupting the Pledge of Allegiance, booing the National Anthem, or harassing elected officials wherever they go we think we are watching the news from some third world country. Unfortunately these have been scenes from Wisconsin in recent months orchestrated by groups exercising their freedom of speech rights for the benefit of a compliant media .

No doubt the protesters are of the belief and spreading the word that if you like government by chaos and mob rule Wisconsin is the place in which to live and do business.

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A recent *Press-Gazette* front page article reported that Brown Counties 24-year old fire investigation truck was wearing out and unable to do the job. We could agree that the truck serves an important function and responsibility and is probably due for replacement. A new vehicle could cost over \$250,000.

What is hard to understand is how such an item comes up after the budget for the county has been approved, and items that need replacing such as police cars, dump trucks and snow plows have all been included and provided for.

We would agree if funding is the problem it was pointed out the present truck was purchased used, and considering it has limited use another used vehicle should be a more cost effective option.

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With Cinderella's Castle in the background Pres. Obama announced plans to ease requirements requiring foreign visitors to obtain visas before being allowed to enter the U.S. This is a time consuming process and apparently has had a negative effect on the nations tourist business. These rules were brought about by various terrorist threats.

Whether it would make much difference to our security is a question. Anything is preferable to allowing people to sneak in without passports, visas, drivers licenses or jobs the way it is now.

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It has been suggested often with tongue in cheek that one way to cut welfare expenses would be to require recipients to submit to drug testing in order to qualify. Drugs cost money and should not be subsidized with our tax money.

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We read that the State of Florida has actually passed legislation barring applicants who prove positive to illicit substances from receiving funds for a year unless they submit to treatment and no funds for three years on the second offense. The justification being that drug testing is required in order to qualify for many private sector and government jobs.

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We read in the *Press-Gazette* that a members of the Brown County Homeless and Housing Coalition will be searching for and trying to take an accu-

rate inventory of all homeless people living in the county. It is estimated the number will reach 500 or more. This is nothing here for the city to be proud of. While many of these people are able to take advantage of the various homeless shelters which are available, and seek assistance apparently all have not been identified.

We realize that homeless individuals and even families are not a new or unique problem to Green Bay, and due to human nature will not go away by itself. It is fortunate that there are several qualified independent organizations concerned with the problem and they are all worthy of community support.

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Mayor Barrett of Milwaukee has announced his interest in running for Governor again against Governor Walker.

It is interesting that the Wisconsin Club for Growth Mayor Barrett observed that Police and Firemen should also have been included in the collective bargaining debate because they were already receiving "Cadillac benefits." The changes enabled Milwaukee to save over \$25 Million a year to help balance his city budget.

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There is little incentive to keeping your money in bank CD's or interest bearing saving accounts when you can't even earn one fourth of one percent interest as a result. The good news is that interest rates to borrow money which is probably good news for the Federal Government.

If you owed \$15 Trillion like the Federal Government does, each 1% more in interest payments amounts to something like \$150 Billion per year, or about \$500 per capita. Don't worry, they don't seem to care either.

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FOX news reported that thousands of Federal employees owe about a Billion dollars in unpaid federal incomes taxes. Apparently no big deal as far as the government is concerned. All they do is keep track of the number for their records.

Now if this was anyone else but a government employee, the procedure would be for the IRS to issue a lien on their salary and deduct the balance due from future paychecks. When government employees evade taxes it is like you and I paying twice.

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President Obama delivered a well orchestrated "State of The Union" address, utilizing all of his accomplished communication skills. You can draw your own conclusions as to his motives on certain proposals or how we would ever go about achieving his announced goals.

On several occasions he promised to sign specific legislation if brought to his desk, and squarely blamed Congress for what has or has not been accomplished during his administration.

Unfortunately most of his proposals carry huge price tags, and his confrontations with Congress usually come at a time when he wants to raise the debt limit another few billion or a trillion and then blame Congress for not agreeing with him.

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The phrase "Economic Fairness," was used widely in the President's address, and probably means different things to different people. He promised to use government power to "balance the scale between America's rich and the rest of the public." The word "fair" itself seems to be used more and more as an excuse to for more big government control, and what one group wants and considers "fair" in order to enhance their lives is not always necessary "fair" for another group to share.

* * * * *

Immediately after his speech the President left for a 3 day campaign tour about the country concentrating on what are considered "swing states."

If "fairness" were a consideration in the presidential campaign, all of the candidates would receive a taxpayer sponsored 747 with backup and staff, along with permission to go about campaigning on company time. It's only "fair."

* * * * *

It could be easier for many people to believe that the economy is improving when it no longer takes five full pages to list the home foreclosure sale notices each week in the *Press-Gazette*.

* * * * *

There are a lot of places to point fingers when trying to reduce the costs of medical care. That is the driving force behind providing health insurance for all of us as well as the high costs of Medicare, Medicaid, and public (and private) employee benefits. It would seem logical to

first contain the costs and then worry about health insurance coverage.

A couple of recent news items as examples. During the past few years artificial hip, knee, and other body part replacement has become a popular surgical option. This is a testimony to medical science and the quality of life we enjoy, no problem. However in most cases it is very, expensive and would not be considered if it weren't for the availability of health insurance.

Now we read that in some cases artificial hips in particular have been failing due to manufacturing defects, which has opened up a gold mine of opportunity for personal injury lawyers to ply their trade. You have seen their ads. The point we make is not so much that a person should not be compensated for injury caused by others as this situation adds a tremendous amount to medical costs to cover malpractice insurance and lawsuits which we all end up paying for. No doubt more research and tort reform limits would help.

A recent *New York Times* article covers another expense problem which is probably more common in other parts of the country than here, but adds considerably to all of our medical costs.

This concerns patients, many of whom are on Medicaid, illegal aliens or others with no insurance who have been admitted to hospitals for an operation or treatment but no longer require hospital care. The problem is they have no place to send them. Nursing homes or limited care facilities are not obligated to take them if they have no way to pay, so often the hospital is forced to keep them in their expensive facilities for weeks and even months free of charge.

While the cost of these people is not reimbursed directly by government programs, the cost to the hospital is factored into the rates they charge all patients.

Rather than constantly blaming insurance companies for their high rates it would seem that we should first itemize all the reasons health care is so expensive in the first place. Many reasons, including excessive paperwork can be attributed to government regulations and paperwork.

Control the costs of medical care and maybe then we can control the cost of insurance coverage.

* * * * *

The cornerstones of President

Obamas economic plans have been to create American jobs to stimulate the economy and spend money to rebuild our crumbling infrastructure.

California, the state the furthest in debt and spending the most money got at least part of the idea right. The aging and earthquake damaged San Francisco Oakland Bay bridge was in need of replacement. Federal funding would require using American goods and labor, but the overall cost to the state would still be excessive.

The contract was awarded to a Chinese contractor to be built in China in sections for \$7.2 Billion to be paid by tolls. This saved California about \$400 Million due largely to the difference in labor costs.

Maybe we can credit the \$400 M savings to our deficit in trade.

* * * * *

Moody's has downgraded Illinois's Credit rating to A2, lowest of the 50 states. This along with massive tax increases in attempts to pay their spending bills.

In the meantime, Illinois's business climate ranking has dropped from 45th to 48th and Wisconsin's rose from 41st to #17. Way to go.

As usual, lots of things to wonder about.

Jim Frink

"Things That Make Us Wonder," consists of taxpayer related thoughts that occur to us from daily 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 for inclusion in future "TAX TIMES."

"The more you read and observe about this Politics thing, the more you got to admit that each party is worse than the other. The one that's out always looks the best."
... Will Rogers

"Nothing is so admirable in politics as a short memory."
... John Kenneth Galbraith

The TAX TIME\$

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The TAX TIME\$ - February, 2012

BCTA Meeting and Events Schedule – MARK YOUR CALENDARS.

Thursday - February 16, 2012. BCTA Monthly Meeting. 12:00 Noon.
Titletown Brewing Co. Bruce Bartel, Tom Sigmund,
Green Bay Metropolitan Sewage Dist. Plans for expansion.

Thursday - February 16, 2012. BCTA Monthly Meeting. 12:00 Noon.
Titletown Brewing Co. Congressman Reib Ribble

Thursday - February 16, 2012. BCTA Monthly Meeting. 12:00 Noon.
Titletown Brewing Co. Program to be announced.

**All Candidates for Public Office are cordially invited
to attend our meetings and will be recognized.**

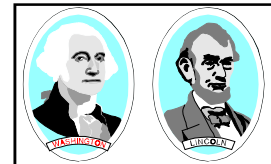
Unless otherwise notified, BCTA monthly meetings are held the Third Thursday
each month, 12:00 Noon, at Titletown Brewing Co., 200 Dousman St.

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 Tom Sladek – 499-7701 for information or to leave message.



February, 2012

“There is no such thing as a non-political speech by a politician.”

. . . Richard Nixon

“Patriotism means to stand by the country. It does not mean to stand by the president.” Theodore Roosevelt

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www.BCTaxpayers.Org

for Details.