



The Alternative

Misguided though well intentioned, liberals have a limitless supply of ideas requiring more taxes and more government spending. Abetted by a sympathetic press, they paint a picture of all the good things that will come of new spending on social programs (see Obamacare), expanded infrastructure (see high-speed rail), or "green investments" (see Solyndra). It's all *good*, suggesting the alternative is, well, *not-so-good*. The alternative, of course, is leaving more of the taxpayers' money in their own hands.

Our challenge is to articulate why the alternative is better – to make people understand that when money is retained by the people who earn it, they do *very good* things with it. Faced with a proposed tax hike to do something "good", what happens if the tax is rejected and the money left with the taxpayer? Here's what happens.

A family of five living near downtown rides in an aging minivan. Dad knows the tires are getting worn to the point of being unsafe, and has been setting money aside for replacements. If taxes are hiked, family finances will become still tighter and the purchase of new tires will be deferred again, placing the family at risk. If the tax hike is rejected, the family buys tires and travels in safety.

A young couple in Howard reads to their toddler daughter every night at bedtime, because they know how the nightly ritual stimulates the girl's mind and develops her interest in reading. Their supply of children's books is limited and the child loses enthusiasm after hearing the same stories again and again. Money is tight, but the couple wants to buy some new, age-appropriate books. If taxes rise, money is tighter, and the child begins to lose interest in reading because the couple decides they just cannot afford the books. Without the tax hike, the new books cause the child's enthusiasm for reading to flourish.

In an older section of Allouez, a man and his wife do their best to keep up with the needs of the small home they've occupied for 30 years. The exterior needs work, and the fading, peeling paint is starting to make the house a neighborhood eyesore. Income is down, as their retirement investments are yielding less than planned, but they have been saving some money in hope of putting new siding on the house. With a tax hike, the siding will not be done, and the neighborhood will incrementally decay. Without the tax hike, they move ahead with the project and the value of their home – along with others on the street – goes up.

The point is obvious: when people are allowed to keep more of their earnings, they spend that money in ways that strengthen families and improve our communities. Families are safer, child development is accelerated, neighborhoods are improved. There are countless thousands of examples every day when families reach a financial margin and ask "can we afford this now, or not?" When the answer is "yes", everyone benefits, and that's a *very good* thing. This is the alternative policy makers need to understand.

Tom Sladek

The BROWN COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION
In our 28th Year of Promoting Fiscal Responsibility in Government.

Regulations By State Senator Frank Lasee

Every year the government seems to get bigger and more intrusive, and every year we have more regulations put on our everyday lives.

A lot of times, people who want more regulations don't realize that you give up your freedoms when the government gets more involved, and more often than not, the regulations don't achieve what their stated goal is.

The Heritage Foundation compiled a few different lists of the worst enacted or proposed regulations of 2012, and I'd like to share some of those with you.

10. Mortgaging the Future: "Simplified" Mortgage Disclosure and Servicing Rules. Last July, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) released its proposal for a more "consumer friendly" mortgage process, with a stated goal of simplifying home loans. You can guess how that worked out.

In typical government fashion, the CFPB's attempt at making home loans "simple" is a 1,099 page document. On top of that, in August, the bureau proposed more than 560 pages of rules for mortgage servicing, which includes the collection of mortgage payments, maintenance of escrow accounts, and loan modifications and foreclosures.

The end result of these regulations means that many of the provisions would micromanage the timing, expand the content, and change the format of the different types of disclosures. All of this, of course, will—simply—reduce consumer mortgage lending options and increase costs.

When it comes to government regulations on mortgages, less is more.

9. Tracking Your Travels: Electronic Data Recorder Mandate. On December 13th, while many of us were preparing for the holidays, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) issued a notice of proposed rulemaking to mandate that car data recorders be installed in most vehicles starting in 2014.

The government says it is to collect more information about car accidents. How would you like a government bureaucrat driving around in your car with you? It's reasonable to believe that those government officials will abuse their power.

8. Choice Cutbacks: Essential Benefits Rule.

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) grabbed the eighth spot when it proposed a list of "essential health benefits."

Obamacare mandates that insurers in individual and small group markets will be forced to cover all of the services that the government deems to be essential, which is scary when you consider that Solyndra and the Bay of Pigs (the U.S. invasion of Cuba in the 1960s) were all considered essential at one point too.

Another problem is that this list is very broad, and because it is so broad, it has created a lot of uncertainty about the extent of essential treatment. The list includes mental health coverage, "wellness" services, "habilitative" services, chronic disease management, and pediatric oral and vision care.

The result will be higher health insurance costs, which will increase the burden on consumers, employers, and taxpayers.

7. Instant Union: Quickie Union Election Rule.

In April, the National Labor Relations Board made new rules that shorten the time allowed for union-organizing elections from [five to six weeks to 10 to 21 days](#).

is leaves little time for employees to make a fully informed choice on unionizing, threatening to leave workers and management alike under unwanted union regimes. Most of the time when people rush you into a decision, it's because they're hiding something, which is what happens due to this rule.

The rule also makes it so people have to vote on whether to certify the union before most of the administrative issues (determining what the union actually does) until after the election.

If unions were so good for the worker, they wouldn't have to hide information from them and write the rules after they are elected.

6. Don't Let Them Eat Cake: School Lunch Standards.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture in January published stringent nutrition standards for school lunch and breakfast programs. More than 98,000 elementary and secondary schools are affected.

If you don't think that your child's school will be affected, keep in mind that there were only 98,817 public schools in the entire nation in 2010, meaning 99.2% of all schools will have the federal government telling school Boards what they can serve in their cafeterias at a cost exceeding \$3.4 billion over the next four years.

The dietary rules have drawn protests from students, including the YouTube video "We are Hungry" from a Kansas high school and a lunch boycott by high school students in Wisconsin.

5. Cleaned Out: Dishwasher Efficiency Standards.

Regulators admit that these Department of Energy rules will do little to improve the environment. Proponents claim they will save consumers money. They will also increase the price of dishwashers and only about one in six consumers will keep his or her dishwasher long enough to recoup the cost. Sounds like a typical government program!

If these dishwashers are so great, then consumers will naturally buy them, and the government wouldn't have to order that they be sold on the shelves. When the government decides what goods are sold, consumers lose. This is why we need free markets, not more regulations.

4. Soda Socialism: New York's 16-Ounce Soda Limit.

Not all regulations come from Washington. On September 13, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, and the New York City Board of Health banned the sale of soda and other sweetened drinks in containers larger than 16 ounces.

New Yorkers are apparently still allowed refills, at least for now. No word on how many New York City cops will be moved from crime prevention to monitor the city's soda fountains.

After people see that this has no effect on how people act, maybe support for these types of laws will fizzle.

3. Sticker Shock: Fuel Economy Standards.

In August, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, in tandem with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), made new fuel efficiency standards for cars and light trucks for model years 2017–2025.

The rules require a whopping average fuel economy of 54.5 miles per gallon by 2025. Sticker prices will jump by hundreds of dollars. Regulators argue that the fuel savings will make up these costs. Whether consumers want to make such a trade-off does not matter. The government has decided for them.

2. Increasing Energy Costs: EPA Emissions Standards.

The costs, however, are certain: an estimated \$9.6 billion



annually. The regulations will produce a significant loss of electricity generating capacity, which would undermine energy reliability and raise energy costs across the entire economy.

This would be devastating to Wisconsin's economy because we get 42% of our electricity from burning coal. Wisconsin has the second highest percent of the workforce in manufacturing jobs in the country. These regulations would make it much more expensive to manufacture in our state and could put many manufacturers out of business.

1. Regulating the Internet: Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA) Thankfully this regulation was NOT enacted last year. People in favor of SOPA said that it was needed to protect against people violating intellectual property infringements. SOPA was so broad that sites like YouTube would have gone dark (be shut down) almost immediately.

If SOPA had passed, sites that posted copyrighted information could have potentially been shut down, which means websites like Facebook, Wikipedia, and the Drudge Report would have had to change the way they operate.

Fewer Rules: As you can see, the rules keep on piling up. We need to stop restricting the freedoms of our people, let them choose what is best for themselves and stop regulating their lives.

One of the major problems with these regulations is that a lot of them were created by unelected bureaucrats who make up "rules" that have a HUGE impact on our everyday lives. These bureaucrats aren't accountable to the people, and that is a bad thing.

Although elected officials aren't perfect, they are still more accountable than people in government agencies. I believe the rules that are made by government agencies should be sent to the state legislature, one by one, for an up or down vote. Last session I introduced a bill that will do this, and I will introduce a similar bill this session. Florida has done this and it has dramatically lowered the amount of rules that restrict freedom and cost us all more. Passing similar legislation in Wisconsin will give the people more say in how they live their lives, which is a very good thing.

I look forward to hearing from you about the issues of concern to you. Please feel free to contact me, Sen.Lasee@legis.wisconsin.gov or (608) 266-3512. If you are planning to be in Madison, please visit, I look forward to seeing you at the Capitol.

State Senator Frank Lasee

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.

National Debt Update.

The expression "*Going over the Fiscal Cliff,*" has been very much in the news during recent months, and apparently means different things to different people. To the President and his supporters, it represented a technical inconvenience to maintaining massive government spending programs, and an opportunity to proclaim that by raising taxes "a little bit" on those making over a million per year the problem could be solved. It was even openly suggested that the debt limit be eliminated, as it interfered with government spending programs too much.

To fiscal conservatives, however, the fiscal cliff only represented the country coming another step closer to insolvency by again raising the debt limit to a point it can never be paid. Their solution would be to try and draft a responsible budget based on fiscal reality which would include spending reductions, and perhaps present an actual budget for approval by the President for the first time in four years.

As it turned out, it was agreed that those making in excess of \$250,000 would see tax increases in coming years. This was anticipated to bring in \$600 Billion over a ten year period, or about \$60 Billion a year. Considering the government falls deeper in debt at the rate of about \$3 Billion a day, this will cover at the most 3 weeks out of a year, assuming that no additional spending programs are added in the meantime.

Year	National Debt	Per Capita
2013	\$ 16,495,498,211,563.20	\$ 52,310.00
2012	16,417,911,635,422.20	52,098.86
2011	15,125,898,976,397.90	48,732.86
2010	13,561,623,030,891.70	43,925.64
2009	11,909,829,003,511.70	38,981.39
2008	11,024,724,896,912.40	36,192.44
2007	9,007,653,372,262.48	29,714.67
2006	8,506,973,899,215.23	28,279.45
2005	7,932,709,661,723.50	26,616.26
2004	7,379,052,696,330.32	25,158.04
2003	6,783,231,062,743.62	23,337.66
2002	6,228,235,965,597.16	21,616.07
2001	5,807,463,412,200.06	20,341.87
2000	5,674,178,209,886.86	20,162.52
1995	4,973,982,900,709.39	17,585.47
1990	3,233,313,451,777.25	12,962.39
1980	907,701,000,000.00	3,994.72
1970	370,918,706,949.93	2,123.93
1960	286,330,760,848.37	1,589.31
1950	257,357,352,351.04	1,690.12
1940	42,967,531,037.68	325.21
1930	16,185,309,831.14	127.21
1920	25,952,456,406.16	243.77
1910	2,652,665,838.04	28.81
1900	2,136,961,091.67	28.08

The chart on the left should give you an idea of where we are going. At the end of January, the National Debt for each citizen stood at \$52,310. Most of it borrowed from foreign countries. An increase of 150% since 2000, or far more than the rate of inflation. Actually the debt for each taxpayer is \$142,000.

The debt in 1950 was still a manageable \$257 Billion. This was at a time we were still recovering from two world wars, a disastrous depression, and completely paying to rebuild Europe after WWII. It is now 65 times what it was just 65 years ago, and we are supposed to believe it will be brought under control with the present policies our government is following?

What can we do? For starters, the President and Congress should stop maneuvering to place the blame for their ineptitude on each other and acknowledge they have a problem. It's called overspending and the country hasn't even started Obamacare yet. A realistic budget should be prepared, and eliminate a lot of things we don't need. The tax code should be examined line by line and obsolescent and political loopholes should be eliminated.

Even though the media who shapes our opinions and the people who run our country tell us everything is OK, can we afford being everything to everyone forever?

Jim Frink - BCTA

"The power under the Constitution will always be with the people."

. . . George Washington

"Political correctness is just tyranny with manners." . . . Charlton Heston

January Meeting Notes.

Monthly BCTA meeting held Jan. 17, 2013 at Titledown Brewing Co. Vice-President Rod Goldhahn presided.

The importance of the spring election was discussed. State Supreme Court Justice Patience (Pat) Roggensack is running for reelection. She is a member of the 4-3 conservative majority of the State Supreme Court. She is facing two much more liberal challengers. Her defeat in this election would put many of the taxpayer-friendly legislative accomplishments of the last two years at serious risk. The primary election date is February 19.

State/Federal: Rod Goldhahn recapped the input the BCTA gave when BCTA officers met with the Governor's staff in Madison. Topics included abuse of Fund 80 by area school districts, wind energy impacts upon citizens, and inadequate or nonexistent oversight of grant expenditures by the state.

County/Municipal: The judicial decision that upheld voiding of the OSGC gasification plant permit by the City of Green Bay was discussed. Circuit Court Judge Marc Hammer ruled in favor of the city, saying the city was within its rights to void the permit.

Public employee salaries published in the Press-Gazette were discussed. Several attendees said they were shocked at how high some of the compensation numbers were compared to private-sector wages.

Schools: Efforts to stop Fund 80 abuse were reviewed. Rod Goldhahn reported that he has contacted Representative Nygren's to request that a remedy be provided in the state budget.

The Pulaski School Board has a new approach to its school referendum, breaking it into two parts, with \$22 million of maintenance and capital expenditures, and a \$650,000 per year tax levy increase for seven years.

The referendum items are: \$4.4 million for building repairs, security upgrades and other improvements, a request for approval to raise the tax levy by \$650,000 in each of the next seven years to pay for technology, \$9.13 million for building remodeling and some classroom additions, and \$8.19 million for a new high school swimming pool.

Ed Jensen and Richard Parins are working to improve the BCTA website. Please send any ideas you have to Ed or Richard.

The next BCTA meeting is scheduled for Feb. 21, at Titledown, with the speaker Green Bay Mayor Jim Schmitt. Details on back page of this Tax Times.

Dave Nelson—Secretary

Things That Make Us Wonder.

We always thought the "no call" list was intended to prevent unsolicited and annoying phone calls to people in efforts to solicit their business. Charitable and political organizations were eliminated from these restrictions for obvious reasons. Did you ever wonder, though, if these exempt groups are obtaining these lists and using them for people who they can call? Especially at meal time.

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California has always been considered a nice place to live and visit, due largely to its pleasant climate and variety of attractions. Politically though, they often appear to be wackos from outer space.

At the end of 2012, the state was \$640 Billion in debt, or \$16,400 per resident. The highest in the nation.

New laws can be proposed by citizen initiative and their legislature and Democrat Gov. Jerry Brown are also very creative in the belief that more laws can solve problems.

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The Packers are a tremendous asset making Green Bay a unique city in which to live.

Their prosperity has enabled them to announce a \$140 Million improvement project at Lambeau Field, making this more on an attraction. However, they still haven't addressed the following: Putting some railings in the steep steps leading to the seating sections for the simple safety of the paying customers sitting in the "coach" sections. What would it cost?

While we realize installing seats is problem due to snow removal, they could possibly buy used seats from San Francisco or Minnesota who are presently constructing new stadiums and give it a try.

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Citing use of performance enhancing drugs by nominees, the powers that select players to the Baseball Hall of Fame decided to forego adding any new players to the list this year. This is their policy, and as a result athletes who were once

regarded as heroes and idols to our youth are now disgraced.

What is sometimes hard to understand is that illicit drug use is probably far more a menace to the country than the steroids athletes take. It is a problem completely ruining the lives of young people and costing billions of dollars to fight but seems to be quite acceptable to many.

Drug use by many of our popular entertainers is an acknowledged and accepted fact. Whenever a celebrity over indulges and dies as a result, which seems to happen rather frequently they are revered and treated as a hero. Is this right?

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Caring for the homeless is a problem that has been around since the beginning of civilization. To some it is a way of life, but to others it is a matter of cruel circumstances. The problem will never go away by itself.

It is also a problem in Green Bay, where we even hear of school children listed as being homeless with no permanent address.

It seems that efforts by the city and various charitable groups with good intentions to provide food and shelter has only resulted in more homeless individuals lining up for their share of benefits.

While we assume various interests concerned with the situation want to do the right thing, the problem could be figuring just what the right thing is and how to manage and pay for it,

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We hear reports that the economy of China has been slowing down. They expanded too far too fast, and have some catching up to do.

What is somewhat puzzling is how they could have grown so big so fast in the first place. One answer could be that in the years when many of our domestic manufacturers were establishing production facilities in China claiming to reduce labor costs, they also furnished them with a lot of our production secrets, including machinery, designs, and even converting raw materials and sub-contracting of components which they never used before. For example, we note that many books and packaging are also produced and

printed in China, and assume their paper and printing industries have expanded as a result impacting Wisconsin manufacturers.

We have no one to blame except ourselves.

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To many people, the Presidents initiatives to control firearms have more to do with his own personal agenda than protecting children, or making this a safer country in which to live. Perhaps another one of the divisive issues he has so skillfully used to divide and conquer.

We face constant threats to our freedom and safety from more sources than it is possible to write laws to protect against. There are a lot of theories to the problem, but no one can deny there is an immunity to violence and lack of respect for the rights of others nourished and even encouraged by the movies and TV shows we see, the games we play, and the news we hear.

For example, on January 15, a man was arrested by Madison police on suspicion of smuggling bombs in to our state capitol which could have ended being a major disaster. This only can prove we face more dangers than just maniacs with firearms.

In addition to Pres. Obamas 23 executive orders to tighten gun laws he also proposed spending \$500 Million for extra security at schools and gun safety education. Cumbersome laws and piles of money can't necessarily solve all problems.

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If you are wondering about what effect Affordable Health Care (aka:Obamacare) will have on your pocketbook and welfare the government is looking out for you. The final draft contains a reported 2,700 pages, but that is just the beginning.

Don't worry however. At last count the army of regulators assigned to clarify and enforce the plan had added another 13,000 pages to assure we all, as Nancy Pelosi said, "to see what's in the plan for us."

For example, they used 24 pages in an attempt to clarify just what an employee is, proving that nothing coming from Washington is ever simple or

for the average person to understand.

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The addition of more IRS agents could assure compliance with our confusing existing tax laws without not the necessity of adding new or raising existing taxes.

Instead, the administration plans to add another 16,500 additional agents at an annual cost of \$881 Million. The purpose is not to ferret out individuals cheating on their current income tax returns but to police and assure compliance with the new taxes and other requirements which will be associated with Obamacare.

Many of the so-called loopholes in the tax laws which allow the wealthy to get by with paying little or no taxes were written into the laws for political reasons and then conveniently forgotten about.

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Good, bad, or proof that they are still 30 years behind us or that the world is getting smaller, the "New York Times" recently ran an article claiming that huge shopping malls are becoming popular in Russia. We still remember pictures of their citizens waiting in line to buy bread at one store and produce at another.

A number of malls with 200+ stores have been constructed in major cities, with one in Moscow said even larger than our Mall of America and complete with an indoors amusement park. We wonder if they also have Sears and Penney's as anchors?

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We commend Gannett Newspapers and the Green Bay Press-Gazette for their recent series, "What We Pay, Your tax dollars and the salaries they support." This series listed the salaries and benefits of Wisconsin public sector employees available through public disclosure laws.

While the strict job descriptions used in the public sector can make them difficult to compare with

"America is the only country in the world where a significant percent of the population believes that professional wrestling is real but the moon landing was faked."

. . . David Letterman

private sector jobs, we are sure that both private and public sector employment both offer unique advantages.

The bottom line and the big difference is that workers in the public sector have their salaries and benefits paid through taxes levied upon the workers, employers, and property in the private sector. When expenses exceed revenue, it is usually a matter of cutting public services or creating more tax revenue.

In the private sector employees wages come from their contributions towards their employer making a profit allowing them to hire and pay employers salaries. Remaining competitive is often a factor in determining wages and benefits.

In all fairness we note that public employees are also obligated to pay income, property, and other taxes.

While it is difficult to compare private and public salaries from limited information, we do have some observations.

One of the first articles in the series pointed that certain public employees were taking compensation in excess of their established salaries. Reasons given included overtime, special assignments, etc. While we realize that often overtime is unavoidable and entirely in the public interest, we often hear of public employees who constantly manage to justify their own actions while taking advantage of the system?

This brings up the subject of responsibility on the part of our elected officials. If you own stock in a private corporation, the management is responsible to you as an owner to operate manage its affairs efficiently and operate at a profit. Is this really much different from any government entity supported by our tax dollars and managed by persons we elect to do the job on our behalf?

In other words, from the top down the people who seek the job and whom we elect are responsible to operate within the budgets and rules they have established. If an employee does not warrant their compensation or are overworked this should be addressed by the committees in charge and remedied at budget time.

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We noted in many cases the benefits, largely health insurance and retirement, were often 30-40% of the stated annual salaries. How these compare with private employment can be difficult to compare. Same as comparing total salaries with hours worked, responsibilities, and actual duties performed. Job security, and enjoying your job are intangibles that each person decides for themselves.

One problem for any employer is paying fairly considering factors such as responsibility, longevity, irreplaceability, etc. If employees compare salaries their can be dissention. We understand the same thing happened when the report was published some school district and state employees found others were being paid more and started to wonder why.

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One of President Obama's top priorities has been immigration reform. He has gone on record as opposing measures making it difficult for the 11 Million illegal immigrants we have in the country to gain citizenship status and voting privileges.

Be claims it won't be called amnesty and will place certain restrictions on eligibility. Sure.

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According to a Press-Gazette article, 34% of Green Bay high school students are considered as "habitual truants." One school reported a rate of 49%, while the state average is still high at 13%. If this is true, is the problem the schools, the city, or our society in general?

This is a terrible statistic, and certainly a negative factor in the graduation and overall achievement rates our schools try so hard to maintain. It has to be demoralizing to teachers and a waste of taxpayer money.

In the meantime the Police Dept. has noted a considerable increase in drug use, burglaries and thefts from parked cars in recent months which may be a related problem.

We have always been proud of our schools and provided resources to make them competitive with the rest of the state. We have embraced federal and state standards in attempts to assure everyone receives an education. The trouble is

you have to get students interested in attending school to get an education in the first place. This problem should be examined and resolved.

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Despite all of the legal prescription drugs for easing pain advocates for legalizing marijuana claim it's the one they need, pain or not. While they may have a legitimate case, they seem to have a lot of enthusiastic backers with more direct motives. For the present law enforcement officials have enough problems with alcohol abuse and other items currently considered illegal.

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Donations made to charitable organizations usually fall into the win, win, win category.

First, you are usually able to take a deduction on your tax return. Second, the charity receiving your contribution uses it to support necessary public needs. Thirdly, while the government may lose some tax revenue, the charity receiving the gift likely performs public services that would otherwise be left to government agencies and expense, only doing it better and more efficiently.

I was surprised to find on the internet a list from the IRS of 290 active Green Bay based charities. Legally qualified to accept deductible contributions. While many were small memorial charities formed to fund scholarships, etc., many have full time staffs and provide a variety of services. This list did not include churches or local affiliates of national charities which also qualify.

This certainly speaks highly of the residents of this area,

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An article in the New York times claims that health insurers have been imposing rate increases of as much as 20% in anticipation of "Affordable Health Care" taking effect, largest increases have been to small business and people providing their own insurance coverage.

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It was disclosed that recent utility rate increases in Wisconsin were less for larger manufacturers than for

smaller business and homeowners.

The justification being that this promotes business development and in turn more jobs. High energy costs in Wisconsin have been proven to be a business deterrent. Makes some sense if the theory works.

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The Wisconsin DOT is hinting at imposing new taxes and fees to fund their various highway building projects around the state. An example is a five cent per gallon increase in the price of gasoline.

Gov. Walker says he opposes the increases, the money will have to come from someplace. While everyone wants better and safer highways, Billion dollar megaprojects such as see in Green Bay and Milwaukee take several to complete and often cost more than anticipated.

It would be nice if someone could develop a concrete that didn't have to be replaced every 30 years or so at double the original project cost.

Did the state ever get back the \$100 Million or so Gov. Doyle borrowed from the transportation fund?

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As this is being written, the legislature is debating the issue of allowing a new iron mine in northern Wisconsin. Supporters claim it would boost employment and the economy, while those opposed mainly have problems with environmental concerns.

While there are valid arguments for and against the project, it seems the people living in the area should be allowed the final decision rather than having special interests 200 miles away arguing about whether they should allow the mine in their own back yard.

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The Commonwealth Fund, an organization dedicated to improving the healthcare system prepared a study estimating the U.S. healthcare system could save \$2 Trillion over the next decade if the government would use its influence to cut costs into line with economic growth and encourage more cost effective care by providers.

In any event, saving even one trillion would be an improvement over what Obamacare will eventually cost.

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We have all received E-mails itemizing how much money Congress could save if they only cut their life-time pensions and a few other items.

Now I received one that proposes that Congress and the Senate be cut in half, the same as private industry has to do in order to cut costs.

In addition to saving close to a billion per year in salaries for members and their staffs, there would only be half as many people proposing earmark spending saving \$7.5 Billion annually. Fewer members debating and proposing new laws could actually speed up the legislative process.

The real savings would come from fewer ex-members receiving life time pensions at their current salaries. Those remaining might have to work a little harder but would also have to work a little smarter get things done.

Something to think about.

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We read the Wisconsin State Assembly has undertaken the task of auditing 11,764 pages of administrative regulations which have accumulated through the years, with the goal of streamlining the rules and removing those that no longer apply. Excessive and frivolous rules and regulations are often cited as discouraging business to expand in Wisconsin. It was not too many years ago the statutes could all be printed in two books and now it takes five.

Examples are rules regulating the size of the holes in Swiss cheese and requiring that orange juice be served in nursing homes.

At one time there were sunset laws in the state to weed out outdated laws and regulations but past legislatures must taken it for sunrise.

It sounds like a good idea and about time someone actually took a look at all the rules in the books.

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Throughout our history women serving in our military have provided valuable and heroic functions. Although we don't know where the idea came from to put them in direct combat came from it sounds like something from Hollywood.

If this becomes a reality, let's hope that whatever country it is we go to war against at that point in time thinks the same way.

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Talk about a classic mismatch. On one side we have 536 Representatives, Senators and a Presidents who we elected to best serve our interests in Washington.

However as of 2012 there were 12,081 registered lobbyists in our capitol retained by all sorts of special interests at a total cost of \$2.47 Billion. Their function it is to do whatever they can to influence legislation of interest to their employers. They are all well compensated, and generally have a background in law and politics so know their way around the "Halls of Congress." We can probably assume they also remind our representatives who contributes to their re-election campaign funding.

We all were swamped with requests for candidate contributions during the last election, and now that is over so there are a lot of special interest requests from various organizations claiming to represent our interests in either opposing or supporting items in President Obamas agenda.

Right or wrong, we can assume that our contributions are used to pay the lobbyists to influence the representatives we paid to have elected to office in the first place.

Further proving that money is the fuel that runs Washington.

* * * * *

As our public schools constantly become more expensive to operate, popular programs often have to be eliminated on a priority basis to help balance school budgets, New programs and mandates are dependent on available funding.

In recent years a number of federal directives have been issued to encourage students to get more physical exercise and eat more nutritious food.

A USA Today article reports that the Obama administration is telling school districts across the country that they must give disabled students equal

access to extracurricular sports. What this means is difficult to determine, but their could be considerable cost involved if special equipment or facilities are required. We have noted that most school districts in this area do everything they can to mainstream students with handicaps, and that students do whatever they can to cooperate.

* * * * *

The Fish and Wildlife Service has announced a 3 year study claiming cats in the U.S. kill as many as 3.7 Billion birds and 20.7 Billion rodents and other small animals each year. What the purpose of this study or its usefulness was not disclosed but it must have kept a few dozen government employees with clipboards busy watching cats eating dinner.

Their next big project will probably trying to figure how many deer and chickens are killed by wolves or how many little fish are consumed by big fish in our lakes and rivers each year. It's all our money.

As usual, lots if 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."

VISIT OUR WEBSITE
www.BCTaxpayers.Org

"If life were fair, Elvis would still be alive today and all the impersonators would be dead." . . . Johnny Carson

"Politicians are the only people in the world who create problems and then campaign against them."

. . . Charlie Reese

The TAX TIME\$

Brown County Taxpayers Association
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Green Bay, WI 54305-0684

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The TAX TIME\$ - February, 2013

BCTA Meeting and Events Schedule – MARK YOUR CALENDARS.

Thursday, February 21, 2013, BCTA Monthly Meeting, 12:00 Noon.
Titledown Brewing Co.
Speaker, Green Bay Mayor Jim Schmitt

Thursday, March 21, 2013. BCTA Monthly Meeting, 12:00 Noon.
Titledown Brewing Co.
Speaker, Brown County Sheriff John Gossage

Thursday, April 18, 2013, BCTA Monthly Meeting, 12:00 Noon.
Titledown Brewing Co. Program to be announced.

Public officials and candidates for public office are cordially invited to attend any of our 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 Tom Sladek – 499-7701 for information or to leave message.



FEBRUARY, 2013

“Politics is very much like taxes - everybody is against them, or everybody is for them, as long as they don't apply to him.”

. . . Fiorello LaGuardia

“Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it everywhere, diagnosing it incorrectly, and applying the wrong solutions.” . . . Groucho Marx

SUPPORT THE BCTA

**New Members are Always Welcome. Call 499-7701
Write us at P. O. Box 684
or visit our website**

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