



Budget Season.

'Tis the season of budgets. From the federal government to your local school district, public officials are all completing their budgets and stating their cases to their constituents. By the time you read this, many will already be approved and in place. Some hold the line on spending and taxes, while others continue to reach further and further into our pockets. One factor all of them faced was a demand for more from the government. More services, more programs, more classes, and more controls to stop people from doing the things we don't like. The swimmers want pools, the campers want low fees, the readers want closer libraries, the school parents want more class options. It's easy to get seduced into the notion that government is the answer, and expect more and more from it to satisfy our individual interests. "After all, each request is only a few dollars a year more on your property taxes." Those taxes then grow and grow and grow. Brings to mind the famous Everett Dirksen quote, "a million here, a million there and pretty soon you're talking real money."

Elected officials are eager to please their constituents. A supposedly conservative congressman recently spoke to our group about the "revenue problem" with one of his sub committees. How does he get more money, not why can't his committee function within their budget. We've challenged school districts who've shifted critical maintenance dollars to more programs, then act surprised and come to the voters with referenda when their buildings crumble. It's not surprising politicians and civic groups were eager to continue a county sales tax once the Packer Tax ended, so government could do more.

In our Mission Statement, the BCTA speaks to "limited government". We cannot have limited government if we continue to look to that government to meet our collective wants. Governments can efficiently provide needed services to meet our needs. We need the discipline to separate the needs from the wants. As Director Heidel pointed out last month, we as citizens must hold our governments accountable to responsible fiscal management. We must also hold ourselves, our neighbors, and our elected officials accountable to the fact that government is not the answer to every issue.

Rod Goldhahn - Director

IMPORTANT NOTICE/LOCATION CHANGE. Beginning with the November meeting, the BCTA is moving our monthly meetings to Doug's Take 5 Grill at the Four Seasons Tennis Club, 3600 Riverside Dr., South end of Allouez. More details inside.

The BROWN COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION
In our 31st Year of Promoting Fiscal Responsibility in Government.

Is Social Security's First Crisis Next Year?

Next year at this time an event many politicians assure us is far in the future is expected to occur: One of the two funds comprising Social Security — Disability Insurance (DI) — will be depleted.

This is no surprise, although the issue has gone largely unnoticed by national political leaders and mass media.

In late July, Social Security's six trustees warned: "The DI Trust Fund reserves become depleted in the fourth quarter of 2016, at which time continuing income to the DI Trust Fund would be sufficient to pay 81% of DI benefits."

Formally, Social Security is known as OASDI, Washington-speak for the Old Age, Survivor and Disability Insurance program. The OAS portion is what most Americans think of as Social Security with its 48.1 million beneficiaries who are either seniors or survivors.

However, it is the smaller disability insurance (again, DI) part of OASDI that is in trouble. Last year, \$114.9 billion in income flowed into the trust fund, while \$145.1 billion was paid out to 10.9 million beneficiaries.

The resulting \$30 billion deficit was not the first; shortfalls date back to 2009. With only \$60.2 billion in reserve at the end of 2014, it does not take a rocket scientist to see why DI fund reserves will run out by 2016.

What happens next? If Congress does nothing, in order to balance DI revenues and expenditures program payments would have to be cut almost 20%.

More likely, Congress will prove true to form and apply a last-minute "band-aid" to DI's long-festering wound. It can do this by diverting some of the Social Security taxes we pay toward future retirement to funding disability benefits now.

Members of Congress will then be able to claim "problem solved!" Except it won't be.

In their late summer report, Social Security trustees also shared important information about the more familiar part of Social Security (OAS) that goes to seniors and survivors. First, they noted that trust fund spending has exceeded income, save interest earnings, since 2010.

Second, they projected that OAS reserves of \$2,729.2 billion will be depleted in 20 years, or by 2035. Diverting some of the payroll taxes we pay from seniors to the disabled will only hasten the date at which Social Security payments to retirees will face potential reduction.

There are alternatives to future benefit cuts, of course. Elected officials in Washington could decide to restore Social Security to long-term health by trimming benefits of future retirees, extending the dates at which those retirees qualify for benefits, or, in a variety of ways, raising additional payroll tax revenues.

None of these options is attractive. But, as next year's projected depletion of Social Security's disability insurance program shows, the alternative is far worse — "surprise" cuts in benefits already being paid out.

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Who Gets Energy Subsidies?

Following is the response of one of our members to a letter to the editor which appeared in the Green Bay Press Gazette on September 20, 2015. In that letter titled "Stop subsidizing dirty fuel", the writer criticized subsidies for the coal industry and called for subsidies for wind and solar at the rate that the fossil fuel industry gets.

"The record needs correcting in regard to a letter to the editor which appeared in Sunday's Green Bay Press-Gazette.

The letter indicated that the fossil fuel industry gets "benefits" from world governments and suggested that wind and solar should be subsidized at the same rate. I agree we should do this in the United States. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, total tax subsidies and support for coal, natural gas, oil and nuclear fuel used in electric production was just over \$5 billion in 2013. A big number.

But, solar received \$4.4 billion and wind received \$5.9 billion related to electric production that year. The three conventional (and reliable) fuels generated 87% of our electricity in 2013. Solar and wind generated about 6%.

So, solar and wind are receiving tax subsidies and support at a rate of 30 times what conventional fuels receive based on their contribution to electric production.

The waste of taxpayers' money is actually worse than reflected in these disproportional subsidies. The cost of transmission lines, grid management and stand-by conventional generation to accommodate solar and wind are also disproportionately expensive because solar and wind cannot be counted upon to be available when needed.

Glen R. Schwalbach, P.E.
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"The more you observe about this politics thing, you got to admit that each party is worse than the other. The one that's out always looks the best. . . Will Rogers

"A liberal is someone who feels a great debt to his fellow man, which debt he proposes to pay off with your money."
. . . G. Gordon Liddy

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BROWN COUNTY
Taxpayers Association

October Meeting Notes. *Overview of Brown County Human Services Dept.*

Monthly Brown County Taxpayers Association meeting held October 15, 2015 at Tiletown Brewing Co.

Erik Pritzl, Brown County Human Services Director, presented an overview of the department he manages and talked about coming changes in human services. He noted that his department has about 40 employees with a \$75 million budget. About 30 percent of the Human Services budget is supported by property taxes.

The Brown County Human Services Department has three divisions: Community Programs, Inpatient and Nursing Home Services, and Business Operations.

Community Programs include Child and Family Services, Economic Support, and Long Term Care.

Inpatient and Nursing Home Services: The Community Treatment Center is a state-licensed 15-bed inpatient psychiatric hospital and 75-bed nursing home. The average census for these two facilities is about 80. Ten nearby counties without similar facilities contract with the Community Treatment Center for services as needed. .

The Business Operations **Division** provides fiscal and clerical support for all areas of the Human Services Department. It works in collaboration with payee Services and Contract Administration.

The Human Services Department works with the Aging and Disability Resource Center, the Brown County Sheriff 's Department, and with local law enforcement agencies.

Mr. Pritzl explained that major changes in human services delivery are being extended to this region of the state. Under the Family Care program, the State of Wisconsin contracts with service providers. The goal is to provide coordinated, comprehensive services using larger providers to obtain economies of scale.

As explained by the State of Wisconsin Department of Health Services: Family Care is a comprehensive and flexible long-term care service system, design to foster people's independence and quality of life, while recognizing the need for interdependence and support. Some Brown County Human Service positions are being eliminated. Many of these employee's are expected to be employed by the new service providers.

State/Federal: BCTA director Glen Schwalbach reported that he testified before the state Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy in opposition to Senate Bill 291, which has provisions muting or limiting local input on the approval of high capacity wells. .

He also cited the example of local governments being eliminated from input on the siting of wireless communications towers.

The next BCTA meeting is scheduled for Thursday, November 19, [n the Take 5 Grill located in the Four Seasons Tennis Club , 3600 Riverside Drive in Allouez. We will have a private room, you can order from the menu or take advantage ov the daily soup and sandwich specials. Our speaker will be State Senator so we would appreciate a good turnout.

Dave Nelson - Secretary

National Debt Update.

With all them hullabaloo about the questions being asked by the moderators and the candidates trying to get the edge on each other, we are surprised that discussion of the National Debt has been a non-issue at the current Presidential debates.

Either the candidates are fearful of promising any goodies to potential voters that will prove to be unaffordable, or push the subject aside until the 2020 campaign.

The good news could be that the November 1, balance of \$18.467 Trillion indicates the National Debt is growing at a slower pace until interest rates finally rise.

Right now, each U.S. would owe \$57,351 but each actual owes \$154,839. Maybe Paul Ryan will finally get a chance to sit down and really talk budget with the President.

New Meeting Location For BCTA.

It seems that every few years the need arises for a change in scenery for our monthly BCTA meetings.

Effective with our next meeting, scheduled for Thursday, November 19, we will be meeting at Dougs Take 5 Grill, located in the front of the Four Seasons Tennis Club, 3600 Riverside Dr., at the South end of Allouez Our first speaker at this new location will be Wisconsin State Senator Frank Lasee, who we are sure will update us on developments in Madison.

Please plan on attending.

While we acknowledge this may sound like an unusual location for our meetings, they offered all of the criteria we expect. A central location, convenient parking, a private meeting room, order food from the menu with daily specials. We think you will agree.

We also want to thank Brent Weycker, and commend his staff for the wonderful service they provided us in the ten years we met at Tiletown Brewing.

They always did everything possible to accommodate, and we had a number of meetings of memory including then Presidential candidate Herman Cain, Congressmen Mark Green, Steve Kagan, and Reib Ribble, Senate candidate Ron Johnson, several appearances by Mayor Jim Schmitt, County Executive Streckenbach, and numerous other local, state, and representatives from national organizations. Always a good meeting with more to come.

Jim Frink—BCTA

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.



Looking Back; (and also Forward!)

The Brown County Taxpayers Association, (BCTA), is by several measures, a rather unique organization. First is our longevity. Although in existence for only 32 years, we are not aware of any similar group in Wisconsin that has been around longer, and if so, we apologize. Many such groups have come and gone for a number of various reasons.

Many such groups are formed when a coalition of citizens becomes alarmed, or otherwise upset about some local spending project they perceive will have the effect of raising their property taxes. Examples could be a new court house, city hall, grade or high school football stadium or city park. Take your choice. The group then signs members, picks a name, approves by-laws, prepares an argument for or against the project, holds citizen meetings, makes presentations and does whatever is in their means to publicize their cause. The next step is usually a referendum which will be approved or disproved on it's merits, leaving a good example of "Democracy in Action." The taxpayers either disband for lack of an issue or continue on general principal.

Although memory as to exact dates is elusive, the BCTA got it's start much the same way. During the 1970's, in response to Wisconsin Counties requesting additional sources of revenue, the Legislature authorized the county option .5% sales tax for county purposes only, to apply to "piggy back" on the state sales tax, and called it "property tax relief." Recall a few month later, despite not facing a crucial revenue problem, public demand, or a great deal of discussion on the part of the County Board, they voted to become the first county in the state with a sales tax. Many businesses who were left out of the discussion pointed out competitive disadvantage. The wholesale industry which is large here complained about extra record keeping due to confusing sales tax laws. The result was the board acknowledged its mistake, petitioned the Legislature to let them off the hook and saw a law passed allowing counties to rescind a sales tax.

With the exception of the Lambeau Tax, we seem to have survived quite well without it. Substituting one tax for another soon turns out to be another tax. The reason relating this bit of Association. Shortly after the sales tax, proposal was rescinded, and with the assistance of the Green Bay Chamber of Commerce, a group of business plore is it was probably the catalyst that led to the creation of the Brown County Taxpayers eople, public officials, and members of established taxpayer groups held a series of meetings resulting in the formation of the BCTA - 32 Years ago.

Unlike the many taxpayer groups who no longer exist after an issue has been resolved, we have remained active. There is no shortage of state and local taxpayer issues to address. Our motto is "Promoting Fiscal Responsibility In Government," which can interpreted as good government providing above average services with the taxpayer's who pay the bill in mind. We believe Green Bay and Brown County the finest places in the world to live and want to do our part to help keep it that way.

One final word. For the past 22 years I have been editing the TAX TIMES. I hope you have enjoyed reading it as much as I've enjoyed preparing it. Problem is, my typing fingers, eyes, lack of time and an uncooperative computer are all taking their toll, so it's time to step down and retire again.

The BCTA directors have addressed this and agreed the TAX TIMES should be continued in it's present format, and I will assist as much as possible during this transition. We have a committee prepared to take over, and are getting assignments set up. We can always use help writing articles, so don't be afraid to volunteer.

One of our problems is that by publishing monthly, there was too little time between issues to allos for preparation, printing and mailing prior to our monthly meetings. Beginning with this issue, we will publish every other month to allow more time to prepare a quality newsletter.

Thank you for your understanding and support for the BCTA.

Jim Frink - Director

Things That Make Us Wonder.

The world's two beer producers, the parent companies of Millers and Budweiser, have agreed to a merger that could control 30% of the worlds beer market and about 70% in the U.S.

If approved, these conglomerates, one English and one Belgian, would form one mega-conglomerate with about 200 of the worlds most popular beer brands under their control.

While this could well be the biggest monopoly ever, they must still comply with the antitrust laws of a number of nations, and prove they "are not to big to fail" to the worlds beer drinkers. That might be the toughest part, and good news for all thr microbreweries.

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Municipalities, schools, and county budget approval time is fast approaching, and ir is important to attend and comment at the public budget hearings if you have any questions.

Remember that the various department heads have had all year to prepare their which must be approved by your elected officials. The big thing to remember is that whatever is approved the final budget will be paid for through the property tax bills you will be receiving about the same time you are finishing your Christmas shopping.

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Relative to the above, County Executive Troy Streckenbach has announced that preliminary figures indicate the county tax rate will be about the same due to increased valuation.

The Green Bay School District also claims it will about the same or with a possible small increase after insurance costs and the final cost of implementing the state voucher system are determined.

We want to commend and support all of our public officials for their efforts to control costs while still providing excellent levels of service with many improvement's to the residents and businesses of Green Bay and Brown County.

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Plans are underway to possibly restore the swimming beach along

with other improvements at Bay Beach Park. Presently the shoreline resembles more of a swamp.

In the meantime, perpetual work continues on removing pollutants from the Fox River, at the expense of the paper industry to the satisfaction of the EPA. While we can't dispute the technology, it seems spending a billion or more dollars to remove a river bottom, haul it somewhere else and replace it with clean sand or clay rather extravagant.

This because no doubt there are countless examples of pollution in the area caused by a wide variety of sources through the years, but will probably have to wait for Mother Nature to clean up.

Yes the Fox River is important and should be cleaned up. We just hope it stays clean so we don't have to pay big bucks to clean it again in a few years and our grandchildren can enjoy a swim at Bay Beach without worrying about strange smells in the water.

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Reference is made to the article on page 2, by Todd Berry of WIST-AX concerning the Social Security reserve fund. While it is no secret the treasury may use the fund as a cookie jar from time to time to support other programs, we are always told "not to worry - trust us, your money is safe."

We and our employers gladly made ever increasing contributions in anticipation of the day we could finally retire. We were also aware that our compassionate government also provided a monthly income to disabled workers, which was fine with most of us.

What we may not have been made fully aware of was that contributions to Social Security are apparently divided in to reserve funds. One for retirement benefits when workers reach a certain age, and one for workers physically unable to work. We probably have no problem with benefits for the disabled, but should they technically come out of the same account being held for retirement of workers still making contributions? It's the same as allowing benefits for new citizens, legal or not, who have not made contributions.

These items should be paid from a general account and not disguised as

part of our retirement benefits.

We are all aware of abuses to the Disability Insurance coverage of the plan, as that seems to be where the shortages are and should be addressed and corrected as such.

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The Legislature is considering a bill that would prohibit transgender school students from using restrooms and locker rooms for the gender they identify with. Supposed to reduce harassment by other students. This could be a problem to implement, and cause more problems than ever.

Next will probably be special facilities for those identifying as gay.

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The Social Security Administration announced there will be no COLA increases next year, although some recipients will pay more for Medicare based on their income.

Citing lower fuel prices, President Obama said the cost of living was down so the COLA increase wasn't necessary. Apparently he hasn't had to buy groceries for a family, pay any medical related bills, or even fill the old 747 with that cheap gas for a campaign trip really know what's going on.

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If you are looking for a good paying job in Wisconsin, running for Governor may not be the answer.

A WISN investigation disclosed that last year Gov. Walker earned a tidy \$143,871.52. There are probably a few employees of the who earned more, and didn't have to go through the expense and grief of an election every couple of years, and don't have the media nit-picking them every day because they don't always agree with them.

Better yet, attend the UW as long as you can, and then become a professor. The system has 1,713 employees earning in excess of \$100,000, each, with the UW president topping out at \$525,000.

As it turns out, Governor Walker would have been the 408th highest paid person if he were in the UW system payroll last year.

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We can admit we have too many instances of mass shooting in this country, but taking away everyone else's guns would be just plain stupid.

Unfortunately what we see in the movies and TV appears to leave a segment of our population with no regards to others, with the rest feeling a need for self protection. We are lucky that suicide bombings to gain attention haven't caught on here.

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With gun control ever at the forefront of those who want to make our lives safer yet more complicated, what about doing more with something that ruins more lives and kills even more people than maniacs with guns?

More people die from drug overdose and crime related to the drug trade than any other single factor. There seems to be too many people profiting and too much money involved to get rid of the problem. While our law enforcement agencies diligently investigate, apprehend, and prosecute the corner street peddlers, this is only the tip of the iceberg. It seems to be a national and international problem with too much power and money involved behind the scenes to ever eliminate.

While we realize marijuana and heroin may be two different things, it still takes a commitment to try them. Users should have full knowledge it may not be the best thing to do. Just like alcohol, you start with beer and advance to whiskey.

The illegal drug trade is undoubtedly one of the largest industries on the country, yet it pays no taxes. It only contributes billions of dollars of cost in then form of prisons, law enforcement, and broken lives. Claiming that "medical" marijuana has value, several states have started allowing it's sales for medical or recreational use, the idea being rather than fight the problem they could profit by taxing it.

Bad idea. Once something considered illegal becomes legal, or vice-versa, all sorts of problems arise. An example is prohibition during the 1920's, and this seems no different.

Perhaps the question shouldn't

Continued next page —————>

be what do some of us want, but where are we all headed? We still punish our mighty athletes for the slightest trace of substance abuse, and believe it still is a disqualification for many of the jobs vital to our economy.

Now that a few states have broken the ice, their seems to be a nationwide media campaign to legalize so-called medical marijuana. Whether this push is by legitimate pain sufferers or addicts is not clear but we seem to have enough problems now with DUI offenders without making another situation worse.

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With the televised debates, the 2016 Presidential Race is gathering team as if it were going to happen tomorrow. Right now, money with which to campaign seems to be the diving factor. He/she who has the biggest war is declared the front runner. He/she is the obvious choice but is held back by the lack of money, or he/she who has the most money is being supported by evil special interests with their own welfare in mind and should be disqualified. That's politics. Take your choice.

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Forbes Magazine recently published it's list of U.S. Billionaires, with about 400 individuals or families making the cut. Not too many years ago a couple of million was considered filthy rich. Bill Gates is still the richest followed by Warren Buffet as No. 2.

While Gates seems to keep his nose out of politics, Buffet is acknowledged as a big Democrat donor, as the Koch brothers support Republicans to keep the playing field level and, we are aree sure party choice is fairly well split down the rest of the billionaire list.

The point is, don't pick on successful people because of their political donations. It becomes public record anyway and it's their own choice.

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While the debates may have been somewhat choreographed, they still haven't indicated a winner. This would be a person who looks and acts Presidential, makes good sensible decisions with the majority of citizens in mind, promotes legislations designed

to solve rather than create problems, and doesn't use every meeting with foreign leaders for a photo op.

In the past we have had several good Presidents who served the country well, and were nominated and picked from the floor at their parties conventions. This was before TV and daily popularity polls keeping track of candidates like a horse race.

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Wisconsin should be proud of the choice of Paul Ryan as speaker of the house. This makes him second in line for President, and the chief negotiator between The House of Representatives and the President.

Congressman Ryan has a reputation of integrity and ability to negotiate. He has chaired The Ways and Means committee and is regarded as fiscally conservative. Obviously the best man for a very tough job.

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While it is a fact of life that the major big money donors to political parties and/or candidates are investing their money where they believe it will do them the most good in the long run. Later on the lobbyists can reap the rewards.in the form of government contracts and partisan legislation. Campaign finance laws designed to put everyone on an level playing field work only as long as the party in power stays in power.

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While the timetable for implementing Obamacare keeps plodding questions as to it's ultimate acceptance keep arising. It was reported by the Congressional Budget Office only about half of the people expected to sign up for exchanges have actually applied to date.

Also businesses are complaining of the costs of paperwork compliance, requiring them to report on workers hours and health care expenses. One reliable report stated that claims against income and reserves are excessive and projected to get worse, leaving the government with the responsibility from the general fund. What did they expect.

Maybe the idea that private insurance companies were bad will

come back to haunt them. There are a lot of reasons for dramatic increases in health care costs during recent years, but mandated paperwork and procedures must figure in. Maybe Obamacare will eventually work, but taking 20,000 pages of bureaucratic double talk and calling it *Affordable Health Care* may be an illusion..

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It's getting so you don't know what to eat anymore. We all realize a lot of things probably aren't good for us, but it's getting so there is not much left. Watching the food shows doesn't help much, as they go on fixing anything they want in large quantities, along with generous doses of salt and shortening.

The biggest problem seems to be every time the experts in Washington decide something isn't good for us, they ban it from grocery shelves, and suggest a substitute. A substitute which tastes lousy, costs more to produce and buy, and doesn't do much to improve your health.

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At this time, the state is preparing to return about \$17 Million in excess sales taxes charged to residents and visitors for the Lambeau Field renovation project. It is interesting to see what the various recipients will do when it is disbursed.

One question may be while we were all waiting for the tax to finally end, why did we all have to keep paying it for almost a year after the financial obligation of the referendum had been met? Anyone who paid \$30,000 for a vehicle during that time contributed \$150.00 to

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."

Looking For A Better Way.

The State of Wisconsin spends over one billion dollars annually to maintain its Dept. of Corrections. This department consists of 37 separate facilities with over 10,000 employees and 22,000 inmates convicted of every imaginable offense from murder to child abuse with business fraud and possession of marijuana in between.

This is more than the amount budgeted by the state to support the entire UW System. Also, the number of inmates and security employees does not include the various county and city facilities which could easily add another billion or so of taxpayer expense to the residents of Wisconsin's 72 Counties.

The state estimates that it costs \$33,483 per year for males and \$41,405 per year for female prisoners in the system. That's just the end, not the beginning. Factor in the other costs of our legal system. Maintaining the courts, investigation and prosecution expensed, record keeping, legal fees including those of the defendant in many cases, and even the costs of monitoring parolees we realize we are supporting more than a taxpayer service. It is an industry, and one of the largest industries in the state.

While Wisconsin's rate of incarceration may be lower than the U.S. average, there still seems room for improvement. It is no credit to the U.S. that we have more people per capita in prisons than the developed nation. With only 5% of the world's population, we have almost 25% of the world's prison population.

Why do we have this problem? We supposedly are the wealthiest, best educated, and most lawful people on earth. Perhaps we should try to look at ourselves more as others see us. Many people blame racism and the war on drugs. Is it because we have too many laws to enforce? We have thousands of people in Washington and Madison whose only function is to transfer legislative thoughts into legalese for approval as law. It is customary to end each of their works with a statement to the vague effect of "*finer and penalties to apply in cases of non-compliance.*" In many cases "*finer and punishment*" are left to the discretion of the judge and jury. Is it because our society has lost respect for the law, authority, and the rights of others? Has it become too difficult to tell right from wrong. Do we depend too much on government to take care of us even if we are locked up in jail?

As with most any large industry, self-perpetuation is a built-in factor to insure growth and job security for their managers and employees. Our entire system of justice is no exception. We realize their importance, and can agree the local, state, and federal taxes we pay for support is money well spent. We realize prison work can be depressing and requires a unique dedication.

That said, what is the structure of all these people we keep under lock and key at taxpayer expense? While we assume the main reasons are to protect the rest of our population from dangerous criminals posing a threat to society, and/or to serve as punishment to those who have committed felonies or misdemeanors punishable by law. We also could assume the inmate population includes a number of misfits who could become useful citizens, as well as those who simply made poor decisions in their life.

Do we have a problem, and are there solutions? With education, highways, and corrections pressuring for increased funding, it could be a matter of priority. Better yet though, could it be putting our money to better use?

Ideally, this could be best accomplished by somehow reducing the number of inmates. Probably easier said than done, but there are possibilities. Some claim the "*War on drugs,*" to be a cause of prison overcrowding, along with calls for liberalizing our existing drug laws. Using medical marijuana as an example, proponents keep calling for legalized prescription use, which they claim would solve the problem. Although we have never heard of anyone being imprisoned for medical marijuana use, if the medical profession agreed they could make it available by prescription only at a pharmacy.

My guess is we would soon find the words medical and recreational interchangeable with more problems and with stronger substances than we have now. Is the problem the people who end up in prison now due to substance possession and the crimes they commit to obtain the stuff, or the big guys at the top of the distribution ladder. A positive side effect could be fewer deaths from heroin overdoses than gunshot victims as at present.

Another area to consider would be through education. We understand that our prison facilities have qualified teachers on their staffs covering basic high school level subjects so that inmates can better cope with society upon release. This would be a positive and cost effective step as we have read several times that a good percentage of prison inmates never received a high school diploma which is a necessity in today's world. As far as our high schools go, do they still teach things like civics, or items like manners and respecting the rights of others along with their political correctness?

At one time Wisconsin prisons operated technical school type classes turning out a variety of products for their own use and other state institutions. For example, the Green Bay facility operated farms which provided food for inmates, clothing and furniture production, and even an auto body shop which repaired damaged state vehicles. These served several purposes in addition to supplying food and clothing for inmates at lower cost, keeping inmates busy, and most important teaching skills and employment discipline useful when released. We understand many of these programs have been discontinued for various reasons but perhaps should be reconsidered and possibly be expanded.

The bottom line is while prisons may exist to protect the public and punish those who break our laws, the majority of inmates eventually become eligible for parole and are anxious to get on with their lives and be with families. Ideally, they are ready to cope with society and not again become a ward of the state. In recent years the state job service has become a major placement agency for employers and applicants. Does this agency, perhaps in cooperation with parole officers do their best to help? The problem being that prison time does not look on one's resume. This is also an area where our Technical Colleges could become involved with their career training and job placement programs.

Finally, while we don't usually advocate throwing more money at problems, there can be exceptions. The state budget has ignored requests for additional funding to provide more district attorneys and legal staffing in the various counties, resulting in huge numbers of cases to be prosecuted, and jails full of people waiting for trials.

We have honest, capable, hard working people throughout the system. It just takes time and research to convict people of a crime but any speed-up of the process would probably be helpful and possibly even save a little money.

Jim Frink - BCTA



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Things That Make Us Wonder.
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... And more !

The TAX TIME\$ - November/December, 2015

BCTA Meeting and Events Schedule – MARK YOUR CALENDARS.

NOTE NEW MEETING LOCATION

Thursday - November 19, 2015. BCTA Monthly Meeting. 12:00 Noon.
Speaker - State Senator Frank Lasee

Thursday - December 17, 2015. BCTA Monthly Meeting. 12:00 Noon.
Program/Speaker

Thursday - January 21, 2016. BCTA Monthly Meeting. 12:00 Noon.

Thursday - February 18, 2016. BCTA Monthly Meeting. 12:00 Noon.

Thursday - March 17 2016. BCTA Monthly Meeting. 12:00 Noon.

Tuesday - November 8, 2016. Election Day, (Finally), Be sure to VOTE!

Public officials and candidates for public office are cordially invited to attend any of our meetings and be recognized.

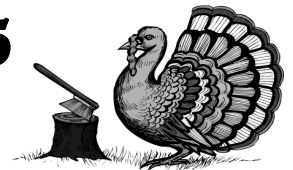
Unless otherwise notified, BCTA monthly meetings are held the Third Thursday of each month, 12:00 Noon, at Doug's Take 5 Grill, 3600 Riverside Dr.

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: Menu. Payable at meeting. Includes lunch, tax & tip.
Call Tom Sladek – 499-7701 for information or to leave message.

November - December 2015



"The future ain't what it used to be."
... Yogi Berra

'I havr often wondered whatn the ten Commandment's would look like if Moses had run them through the U.S. Congress.' ... Ronald Reagan

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.**