

Civics 101

Rich Heidel BCTA President

In fifteen years of service as an elected official, I've come to understand more than a few things about government and the governed. I might summarize many of those lessons by simply stating how amazed I am that our American representative democracy has survived for 230 years, which, in the world of national governments, isn't all that long. Despite the relative youth of our nation, our Constitution is already the longest-lived constitution in existence today. And all of this despite – not because of – ourselves.

In these jaundiced times of self-flogging, I will admit – first but only once – that our form of government has had its flaws and is still nowhere near perfect. But, I will also state that our form of government is nothing short of inspired, God-blessed, and a stellar example of what can happen when freedom is seen as God-given, as natural law, and is allowed to rain down on men and women. Our Constitution is the greatest charter of liberty ever written and it's why our nation surged as quickly as it has as the most free, most prosperous nation in the history of the world! Our founders asserted – and it's still true – that our rights as human beings come from God, not from the government. Our form of government was intended to protect all of our rights, while helpless to extend any right to any of us. Rights are for government to protect, not to bestow.

Today our public schools fail to even visit, let alone explain, these founding principles of unalienable rights, scope of limited government, balance of power, free enterprise, and civic duties. Instead of being taught about our nation's triumphs, good intentions, and generous heart in attempting to overcome our admitted shortcomings, today's students are taught instead that ours is a history of failure, injustice, racism, and sexism. As a result, young Americans will eventually be running for political office who are not only ignorant of our principles and traditions of liberty but openly hostile to

them. This is an indictment of too many of our public schools across the nation.

What to do about our public schools? There are several opportunities for individuals to make a difference. The greatest responsibility for our youth's education lies with their own parents. There is no substitute for parental challenges to teachers, staffs, and school boards to present objective, unbiased curricula. The typical parent, if involved at all, will spend more time cheering at an athletic event than periodically discussing civics material (history, economics, government) with their child. Parental example in fulfilling civic duties is also the single most important method of teaching a lesson.

Support by all – parents and taxpayers – for school choice programs is becoming more and more popular. Enrollment in school choice is up 8% in Wisconsin this year. Public education is just one educational option; other options are private, parochial/religious, or home schools. These other options don't shy away, or back down, from teaching values. Political correctness is not a background criterion for filtering what should or should not be taught. A couple of other remedies are the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance's 19th edition of "*Your Framework of Wisconsin Government*". This is Wisconsin's only textbook on state and local government. Also, contributing to or participating in outreach or off-campus programs on American government and values like those offered by Hillsdale College (www.hillsdaleforliberty.com) are exceptional in terms of cost and content.

Finally, school board positions are up for election every spring. If you can read, write, add, and are concerned with the direction of our nation and, thus, our public schools – a mandated tax burden on all of us, you have what it takes to make a difference. Plato once said, "One of the penalties for refusing to participate in politics is that you end up being governed by your inferiors."

Rich H

September Meeting Notes

Attorney Jason Weid, formerly Vice President-Administration/General Counsel for the Green Bay Packers, spoke about the Lambeau Field renovation and other issues related to the Green Bay Packers.

He earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and his law degree from Marquette University. In the summer of 2000, he began working for the Green Bay Packers, beginning his 11 ½ year career with the Packers. His first duties included negotiating the Stadium lease and labor contracts. For the Stadium renovation, the sales tax generated \$180 million and the seat license fees generated \$100 million.

Leaving the Packers in November 2011, he spent two years with a small law firm. He joined the Green Bay office of the Menn Law Firm in the fall of 2014. Currently, he is practicing as an attorney and human relations consultant as Jason Wied Consulting.

"Someday" was the threat facing the Green Bay

Packers which motivated the Packers' leadership to develop a plan to renovate the Lambeau Field Stadium renovation. The threat was not immediate. It was 20 years or more down the road that the NFL owners were likely to take the Green Bay franchise and move it to a larger city with more revenue potential.

As an NFL franchise, the Packers do not pay federal income taxes, but they do pay Wisconsin income taxes. The Packers are organized as a non-profit stock corporation. In contrast, PMI is a for-profit, non-stock corporation, which raises questions about where PMI's profits go.

Responding to a question about the lack of railings on the steps in the Lambeau Field Stadium bowl, he explained that the Packers had made a substantial effort to install railings, but the state ruled that railings would present a serious hazard in case a mass evacuation would be required. The Packers sent a delegation to Madison to lobby lawmakers, but they were unsuccessful.

Dave Nelson - Secretary

Things That Make Us Wonder.

The string of hurricanes which swept through eastern Texas, other southern states and Caribbean Islands along with California wild fires destroying thousands of homes and causing hardships for many beyond our imagination. It will take a while for any of them to return to normal.

We can agree they are all nice places to visit, but we don't mind shoveling a little snow once in a while.

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Controlling immigration is a problem to which there seem to be no easy answers. Building a wall along the Mexican Border was hopefully just one of the President's symbolic gestures but it is a completely stupid idea. Quotas are impossible to control but seem to be easy to ignore. Maybe our country is too big with too many places in which to hide. When we have "sanctuary cities" like Madison and Milwaukee in Wisconsin who already

have enough problems of their own turning their backs on Federal law what can you do? No doubt half the people on earth would gladly move in with us if we would pay the way and provide our standard of living.

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Unfortunately one Federal program which has benefited Wisconsin employers and is being reviewed by the state department is the J-1 Visa program. This is the program which foreign residents to work for specified periods of time in summer or other part time jobs.

The concern of the state dept. was that American jobs were being lost as a result, but the evidence is that many of these workers were employed in farm jobs which can be difficult to fill with domestic workers or at summer jobs in tourist areas such as Door County, WI.

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The *Resch Center* is a popular entertainment venue and has done much to enhance the image of Green Bay through the variety of events held

there.

What causes us to wonder is that a recent newspaper article stated management of the facility was asking the county for \$1 million to cover "maintenance costs." In addition. A more recent article cited a report that was based on attendance to events headlined the following: "*Resch Center ranked among 15 highest-grossing arenas in the world.*"

Something is wrong here. Either the Arena business is a money losing proposition, or there is a management problem. Admission to events or arena rental is not cheap, but as in any business, we would assume that overhead and maintenance is included.

Much praise is given to the economic impact of events and attractions in the area, but sometimes we should factor in how much of our hard-earned money leaves town along with the entertainment.

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There have been a number of re-

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August Meeting Notes

County Executive Presents STEM Proposal

Brown County Executive Troy Streckenbach presented his proposal to establish a STEM (Science Technology Engineering Mathematics) Innovation Center. When he ran for County executive, he pledged to create an environment that increases job opportunities.

Local business leaders have expressed their concerns about the future supply of workers with technology skills. Where is our next generation workforce going? They are going to Milwaukee, Chicago, and Minneapolis. Ironically, we have corporations that are opening shops in Milwaukee and Chicago because they can't find the workers that they need here.

A study highlighted clusters that are Brown County's strengths. They include food processing, watershed stewardship, healthcare, transportation, and logistics. These clusters require workers with STEM-related skills.

We want to create a pipeline of young minds that are interested in STEM-related fields. The Einstein project attracts and encourages these young people. The STEM innovation center can provide a pathway for them to follow their interests into useful and rewarding careers.

What can the County do to address the workforce pipeline concern? Collaboration between the private sector, government, and the education sector is the route toward the best outcomes.

Fifty business leaders signed on to a letter that resulted in Governor Walker placing \$5 million in his budget for the STEM center project. With \$5 million from Brown County and \$5 million from the private sector, there will be 15 million to initiate the STEM research and innovation center.

We need an engineering school here to foster a research and innovation environment. It also becomes a source of workers with technical degrees. Establishing an engineering school is difficult because there is an attitude that our state university campuses do not need another engineering school. With the help of State Representative John Nygren, We were able to gain approval for a mechanical engineering program at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay.

Executive Streckenbach's ultimate goal is that UW-GB has an engineering school that triples in the next 10 years. This goal is the regeneration of the next generation.

Dave Nelson - Secretary

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cent articles, possibly spread by fear of Amazon, claiming the wave of the future will be grocery retailers making direct deliveries to your home either by drone or some other Buck Rogers method. The claim is that the super market chains are fighting to compete out of fear of losing business. Gas stations are already competing with every day items.

Draw your own conclusions. While this could someday become a reality in certain locales, can you really imagine such a scheme actually working?

Meanwhile, it makes a good story.
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At this time, it appears that everything is falling in place to construct the "Shipyard" baseball park on South

Broadway. We are told it will pay for itself.

Details yet to be worked out include finding adequate parking space for customers and what to do with the railroad tracks crossing the property.

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Every so often one or another of our politicians will propose legalizing the sale of marijuana to some extent, either nationally or within the state. They point to Colorado, the first state to legalize it's sale. and the taxes which could be raised in Wisconsin if it were made legal here. In 2015, Colorado collected \$130,411,173 in taxes which is a nice figure but only about 1.1% of their states budget. Also since marijuana was now "legal" officials have detected a considerable increase in black market sales, and especially in black and latino neighborhoods and

particularly to avoid the tax. It would only seem logical that easing the availability of marijuana would lead to greater use of more powerful and dangerous substances. What did they really expect was going to happen?

While we fill our prisons with the victims of drug abuse, and the low end of distribution scale, it is unfortunate we are unable to eliminate those who grow, process, distribute, and profit immensely from their trade under the watchful eyes of officials with their hands out.

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It appears that Foxconn has settled on a Racine County site for their mega factory, so it is now their problem. We do hope it proceeds as planned, as there are many factors involved. It will be an

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interesting experience in the art of luring business to Wisconsin.

There was talk of trying to attract them to our part of the state. Remember the problem we had just a few years ago just finding room for a new County jail.

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Whether or not Wisconsin is guilty of Gerrymandering with their political boundaries will apparently be up to the U.S. Supreme Court to decide .

Meanwhile Democrats in Congress have been complaining that the present system favors rural rather than urban areas being the reason Republicans hold the majority in both houses and many state legislatures.

Simply put, and without elaborating, this could be true, but a problem of their own making. Candidates from rural areas often may not be regarded as being as corrupt by voters as those from the big cities.

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The Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance has published a comparison of the taxes we pay compared with the nation as a whole. This time we ranked 21st highest nationally when Just a few years ago we were consistently in the top 10 highest taxes, which is good. Our property and personal income taxes are still high at 15 and 18% but sales taxes in our state are only 33d highest as other states may have higher rates or find more things to tax such as groceries,.

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The words "Tax Reform" and "Tax Cuts" often show up in Washington press releases this time of year as we start getting our tax papers in order and wonder who devised our system of taxation in the first place. The two terms are not necessarily as interchangeable as politicians would like us to believe.

This year, a graduated "flat tax" establishing lower tax rates with fewer brackets is getting a lot of attention; Under the assumption that we all understand the necessity of taxation, but feel we are paying enough already,

don't get too excited.

Although a LOT of details will have to be worked out by a multitude of powerful special interests. What we have heard so far is that the lower rates could be offset by a reduction or even elimination of many if not all of the many deductions we all use which support charities, pay medical expenses, mortgage interest, and a zillion other items added through the years added to the tax code. Allowing a flat deduction would create more problems.

No matter what happens, Congress will have to address all of the special rules and exemptions added through the years for special interests, some of which no longer exist. Any tax revisions perceived by the public as designed to "help the rich" will be DOA.

The bottom line is raising enough money to keep both the government and voters happy. If all else fails, you can publicly blame and chastise the other party as being opposed to tax reform.

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Amidst all the talk of tax cuts the fact remains that our National Debt keeps rising. It's one of those things politicians don't like to talk about. At the end of October it was in excess of \$20,450,000,000,000.! That's 20 Trillion bucks, or \$62,156 for every person, legal or otherwise claiming U. S. Citizenship. The interest alone has to be the countries biggest expense.

Almost a third of this debt is owed to China, who seem to be having no trouble building high-speed railroads, highways, airports, and big tall buildings all over the place with money left over to borrow out. They send "tourists" here to study our methods, but maybe it should be more the other way around.

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The NWTC has opened an enlarged transportation Center, designed for the teaching of auto and truck maintenances and repair. They claim and prove there is a large demand

for their graduates in good paying jobs in the area and in many fields. They work with potential employers to keep up with training on up to date methods and equipment.

Meanwhile the heavily taxpayer subsidized UW System reports a reduction in enrollment at several of their campuses which has also resulted in a reduction of tuition revenue for the system.

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Talk of abandoning the penny as a unit of currency is not new. They now cost 1.5 cents each to produce, and the Govt. lost \$45 Million last year alone making the things. Most of them probably end up being saved in mason jars in the hope their value will increase.

Their only real value is in making change. However rounding off to the nearest nickel can add up. Retailers have a passion for pricing products at ,99 cents and adding sales tax which seldom ever comes out even. It's been a long time since we could buy a piece of candy for a penny.

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Even though it didn't happen here, the Green Bay 9/11 memorial seems appropriate to the National tragedy that it was, and ideally located for public view.

Cleaning up the debris from the huge skyscrapers, passenger planes, and human victims of the attack was

Monthly Meetings @ The Village Grille

The BCTA has moved our monthly meetings to **The Village Grille** at the corner of Hoffman and East River Drive, Al-louez. Our new location has no stairs or steps, convenient parking, and a room to better accommodate speakers and conversation. There will be three selections from which to choose lunch - each one will be priced at \$10 (including tip.) Lunch is at 12:00 noon with monthly speakers presenting.

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undoubtedly a most traumatic and unpleasant experience for those who were assigned the job afterwards, and we assume most of rubble was completely unidentifiable. From what we read, whether the Green Bay memorial actually contains human remains is speculation, but it makes a good story.

Fix the memorial if needed. Tell the story of 9/11 to educate future visitors to the site, and the fact if contains actual remnants of the tragedy without elaborating.

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Green Bay is always looking for ways to attract business and visitors to the downtown area. It is difficult to imagine how increasing meter parking from .75 cents to .85 cents per hour as proposed for next year will help. What will it cost just to re-program all the meters?

The \$66 Million, renovation of the Hotel Northland was touted as being the catalyst to revive the downtown area, to be ready for this years Packer season, but has been plagued by financial and other problems. Maybe next year.

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The singing of our National Anthem at sporting events has become more of a political than a patriotic issue. Whether the decision of the TV networks, advertisers, league, local teams, or a combination thereof, home viewers, at least in this area were denied the anthem and the government sponsored jet flyover anyway. From what we have seen the vast majority of fans and players attending seem to stand and show respect for their blessings.

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We may all be responsible for the

depletion of the earths resources, and the well being of generations to come. We use sources of energy and other precious assets as if the supply will last forever.

Iron and copper are in demand and deposits have been identified at various locations in northern Wisconsin and Michigan. Pointing out the economic impact mining would bring the mining companies are all set to go. However residents of the areas involved remain firmly opposed, citing likely environmental damage, causing delays and cancellations to many of the projects. While lawyers and courts can order progress, they can't change the environment.

Actually it's probably impossible to cut down trees, plow a field, build a highway, drill or dig a mine anyplace and not upset or do damage to something else we want to protect.

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The world is getting more crowded and placing more demands on available resources including just a place to call home. Some people would like to allow unlimited immigration to the U.S., as long as they vote Democrat.

We used to believe that New York was the worlds biggest city. We recently read there are now 31 "mega cities" with populations of 10 million or more. There were only three in 1975..

Most of us probably agree Green Bay is a nice size with manageable growth.

Even wars or abortions can't slow population growth. It is estimated 60 million people lost their lives in WWII: an average of 27,000 per day between 9/1/1939 and 9/2/1946. The British Medical Journal estimates 56 million abortions annually in the world: 97% in undeveloped countries.

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The U.S. and Russia seldom really co-operate on anything but they at least keep avenues of communication open. Treating each other as adversaries and even enemies could be more harmful than productive at times.

There are a couple of things many of us are getting tired of hearing about. One is our last election, the results, and the excuses about Russian meddling being offered by the losers. It's all about politics.

The media is not doing the country any good by their constant bashing and criticism of the President. Everything from not following the script when offering condolences to his undoing items from the previous administration which is why people elected him.

The rest of the world is watching and laughing and wondering and we are also. About our media who we depend on to keep us informed rather than misinformed. As usual, lots of things to wonder about.

"Things That Make Us Wonder," consists of mostly 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 "The TAX TIMES."

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 TIMEES." Please send them to the BCTA, P.O. Box 684, Green Bay, WI 54305-0684 or email BCTaxTimes@gmail.com

The TAX TIMES

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Meeting Location

The Village Grille, Allouez

BCTA Meeting and Events Schedule – MARK YOUR CALENDARS.

Saturday - Nov 11, 2017 Veterans Day

Thursday - Nov 16, 2017 BCTA Monthly Meeting.
12:00 at **The Village Grille, Allouez**

Thursday - Dec 21, 2017 BCTA Monthly Meeting.
12:00 at **The Village Grille, Allouez**

BCTA monthly meetings are held the Third Thursday of each month, 12:00 Noon, at , at The Village Grille, Allouez.

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: \$10.00, Payable at meeting. Includes lunch, tax & tip.
Call Tom Sladek – 499-7701 for information or to leave message.

Nov - Dec 2017



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New Members are
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Visit our website
www.BCTaxpayers.Org
for Details.**