

Facts regarding BCTA's actions to stop Brown County's new sales tax

On May 2nd, 2017 County Executive Troy Streckenbach announced he was seeking a new sales tax which would generate \$147 million in revenue for the County over six years (\$24.5 million per year average), and listed a number of initiatives to be paid for with the tax. Streckenbach advocated for the County Board to enact the tax at its next meeting, 15 days after his announcement.

Alarmed at the gigantic size of the tax increase and the pace at which Streckenbach was moving, BCTA leadership asked the County Board to slow down and to put the question to a referendum so that the projects could get proper discussion, the level of public support could become known, and the legality of the proposed use of the money could be properly explored.

The Board displayed no interest in delaying nor seeking a referendum, and voted on May 17th to enact an ordinance (subject to a couple of contingencies) advancing the implementation of the tax.

Next, BCTA leadership engaged the Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty

(WILL). WILL is a Milwaukee based non-profit, non-partisan organization which litigates in the areas of property rights, the freedom to earn a living, voting rights, regulation, taxation, school choice, and religious freedom. BCTA discussed with WILL the statutes which authorize County sales taxes and whether Brown County's actions conformed to the statutes. The organizations shared the view that the County's actions were in violation of Wisconsin statutes and WILL offered to represent the BCTA in this matter.

On January 2nd, 2018, WILL filed suit in Brown County Circuit Court on behalf of the BCTA. The lawsuit contends the County's sales tax is not being used to reduce its property tax levy but is instead being used to evade the County's levy limit and is therefore void and unenforceable. On February 20th, Judge Atkinson held the first hearing in the matter, dealing with BCTA's request for injunction and the County's request for dismissal.

As of this writing, Judge Atkinson has dismissed the case without prejudice. BCTA will be reviewing its legal options with WILL.

January Meeting Notes

Voting Laws Explained

Sandy Juno, Brown County Clerk, spoke about voter registration and voting procedures. She is in her sixth year as Brown County Clerk. Prior to that, she served 15 years as Deputy Brown County Clerk.

Photo ID became law in Wisconsin about 2 years ago after extensive legal challenges. When Sandy began working in the County Clerk's office, there were no voter registration requirements. The City of Green Bay maintained its own voter list. Several towns had no lists at all; citizens voted on their own recognizance. The Bush-Gore recount stimulated action on voter registration. In 2006, the State of Wisconsin established a master voter list, which is used by local units of government. About 2 years ago, the state established MYVOTE.WI.GOV on its website to help voters to identify their voting places and register to vote. Registration can be done online up to 20 days before an election.

Snowbirds can register to vote in another state and vote there. However, they can only vote in ONE state in a given election. Voting in more than one state in one election constitutes election fraud and exposes the voter to criminal prosecution. Wisconsin is one of 21 states in a consortium of states that exchange voter list information. Postcards are sent out to verify voters' registration. Failure to return a postcard will result in the citizen being dropped from the voting rolls.

Citizens that are dropped from the voter list can reregister at the municipal clerk's office or at the polls on election day. Challenges to a citizen's right to vote require solid evidence. A citizen who has incomplete registration can vote with a provisional ballot on election day.

When photo ID is checked, the poll workers are looking for three things: name, the photo, and the expiration date.

Dave Nelson - Secretary

February Meeting Notes

Several current taxpayer issues were discussed by the members present.

There is hope for Wetland regulatory reform. AB 547 and SB 600 provide a comprehensive overhaul of Wisconsin's regulatory oversight of wetlands and wetland mitigation.

For non-federal wetlands the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resource's (DNR) regulatory oversight of lower-quality, non-federal wetlands would be reduced.

For federal wetlands, the DNR would be authorized to request permission from the Environmental Protection Agency to take exclusive regulatory jurisdiction over federal wetlands.

For artificial wetlands, permitting requirements for disturbances to artificial wetlands would be eliminated.

A Mitigation fund would be established to provide timelines and priorities for the DNR to spend money, currently \$15 million, in a wetland

mitigation account. The Wisconsin Builders Association strongly supports this wetlands regulatory reform.

Several other bills with the potential to reduce or eliminate local control of issues that have traditionally been under the jurisdiction of local governments were discussed. Nonferrous metals mining is becoming a hot issue.

Shea Sortwell, candidate for the Second Assembly District seat being vacated by Andre Jacque, spoke about his background and his positions on issues. (Andre will be running for the First Senate District seat vacated by the resignation of Frank Lasee). Shea noted that he is a Supervisor in the Town of Gibson in northern Manitowoc County. He explained that he is a fiscal conservative, committed to continuing the governor's efforts to return money back to the people. He also supports reducing and simplifying regulations wherever possible, thereby lightening the burden they place on citizens.

Dave Nelson - Secretary

Things That Make Us Wonder.

Another big election year has arrived despite the fact that many people are still grumbling about the last one. The results depending on the vote this time will be control of the House of Representatives and Senate, along with the Governor, state representatives, and local officials, a lot is at stake and the races are all important.

Unfortunately the TV commercials we are bombarded with at election time can do as much to discourage as to inform potential voters about a candidates character and qualifications. Recall a few years ago, it was mandated that whoever was sponsoring and paying for politically related TV ads clearly identify themselves at the end of the commercial. Bit by bit this ruling has been ignored. First by using unreadable type fonts; then by flashing the message by so fast it becomes unnoticeable. Now they seem to be able to ignore this ruling completely, this is significant! For one thing, the printed press and broadcast news who profit from these ads are supposed to present us with the news on an unbiased basis, but have gained a reputation, fairly or not and for us to be polite, slanted towards their own beliefs and philosophies. Political ads, in any format, do not neces-

sarily tell you everything you want to know about a candidate, but knowing what group endorses him or her can be helpful. It is no secret that well-funded special interests, either corporate or social, can have a lot to gain from who holds public office, and their interests may or not take precedence over the citizens or country as a whole.

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One other factor which seems to have become quite predominant in recent elections are negative or attack ads against an opponent. Rather than print positive facts about your candidate, the choice is to demonize the opponent, in a hushed voice. complete with touched up photos and claims which may or may not be true of his or her history and intentions if elected. This would qualify as slander under other circumstances and unfortunately can tend to give politics a bad name. The answer might be, simply do your homework and think carefully before you vote, and hope the other guy does the same. You can use the commercials as a guide if you can figure out where they come from. The bottom line is who would be best for you, your neighbors and the rest of the state and country.

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Somewhat related, and a subject most us are probably tired of hearing about is "secret memos" and Russian involvement in our

2016 election The election is over and the results are in. There have been no accusations made of Russians counting our ballots with the results already determined, as they might do, or of us interfering with their elections. Our own media with it's own agenda did everything in its power to influence the outcome and we question if anything besides the American voter tired of the way many things were going in the country reacted.

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The Democrats are still trying to figure out how they lost the Presidency and Congress in the 2016 election when the popular vote was in their favor. They have accused politicians of Gerrymandering of the voting districts in several states, including Wisconsin, so that the elections favored their opponents. While each state is geographically different, voting districts are supposed to be fairly equal in population and make sense geographically and subject to review after each census to allow for significant population changes.

While the system has worked fairly well, the supreme Court was asked to rule if all states were abiding by the rules. The SCOTUS is still working on it. Despite the difference in the popular vote, of the 3,141 counties in the U. S., Trump won in 3,084 of

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

them, so figure it out. The big reason seems to be the vast majority of Democratic votes came from big cities like New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago where ward bosses and machine politics handle elections.

Chalk one up for our founding fathers for their foresight in creating the Electoral College. To arrange voting districts by political choice would result in incredible problems and confusion. Instead of the term Gerrymander, we would be calling some voting districts an "Octopus" due to the long tentacles following highways in search of more Democratic voters.

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President Trump's term in office has been off to a rocky start, with not much help whatsoever from anybody. The media puts their negative spin on everything he does or doesn't do, and the late-night talk show hosts keep beating the drums. While we all may agree he could be a little more careful with his tweets and more careful with words and choice of key political appointments, he has also initiated a number of items he was elected to do.

President Obama left office

with some achievements to his credit, and we don't really know what would happen if Hilary had been elected. We watched his recent SOTU address with the anticipation that the parties would work together to iron out differences and come up with solutions but so far have seen none of that actually happening.

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The horrible high school shooting in Florida is typical of an event that has become far too commonplace to accept in a civilized society. Is using the NRA as a whipping boy, (and political revenge), or placing guards in every school going to be our best answer, or just an excuse? Many people, especially the young are obsessed by the publicity received by lunatics and their accomplishments, be it good or bad and see no harm in emulating them to also receive fame and perhaps notoriety. Educated on video machines and Hollywood movies and TV shows with plenty of shooting with no mention ever made of the victims or the grief caused their families.

If we ever completely control guns, or lose the NRA as an active organization we are sure the

wackos in this country will find some other way to raise havoc. In other countries terrorists have perfected explosive devices and driving cars and trucks into crowds which can be an even worse way to gain attention, vent your frustrations, and make headlines.

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The Foxconn project is proceeding in Racine County and we wish them success. Gov. Walker has taken a lot of flak for his endorsement, but that is probably nothing compared to what would have happened if the company decided on Iowa, Minnesota, or worse yet, Illinois.

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One possible side effect of Foxconn. Realizing that Wisconsin is sensitive about jobs and job retention, along with a reputation for excessive regulations, other companies feel entitled to some of the perks offered Foxconn. Paper manufacturing is a industrial backbone providing jobs at least in this part of the state, it would be devastating if they say good-bye.

This is a problem that will probably be handled one by one and on a local basis as with the Kimberly-Clark mills. Its probably impossible to build a new mill from scratch with the environmental considerations to be met. Another chief culprit is property taxes, and how to assess industrial property equally and fairly, the

(Continued on page 5)

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

(Continued from page 4)

same with retail property. While taxed on the value of the property and buildings they occupy, some are far more profitable due to the nature of their business. Should all non profits be tax exempt?

Presently mining operations in Wisconsin and Menominee County, MI, are on hold and large dairy farming operations in Wisconsin are having ground water compliance questions.

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The addition of the word "Marriott" to "Hotel Northland" should mean a lot when the renovated structure is finally opened for business. Even Mr. Chauffer (R.I.P.), would be very proud to stand outside a Marriott.

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It is exciting news that UWGB will be adding an engineering school to its campus. Grads should be in demand for good paying jobs which we hear there is a shortage.

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The problem of illegal immigrants and their offspring in the

country remains unsolved and is even being used as a political bargaining issue. We doubt anyone knows the exact number involved except it is substantial. Some of them have been here for a long time and have become quite well established. We realize we are pretty much all descendants of immigrants, but our ancestors followed the rules of the time. These rules have changed through the years but are well established and not meant to be ignored. As far as children of illegal aliens, shouldn't the children be considered alien also?

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The government has announced it is imposing tariffs on the purchase of iron and aluminum from foreign countries. We are not aware of what brought this about, but environmental rules limiting production may be one reason. The cost of products, including beer cans, is likely to rise as a result.

Tariffs may have their place in world trade, but often end up in reciprocity battles and deteriorat-

ing relationships between countries.

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The New York Times printed a survey comparing taxes paid against average income. Wisconsin placed 48th out of the 50 states. Whether or not the new tax laws will help Wisconsin citizens we don't know, but do know that things like a wheel tax, county sales tax, and proposed gas tax increase don't help the situation. The question might be, How much lower than 48th place can we go?

As usual, lots of things to wonder about 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."

Jim Frink, BCTA

Monthly Meetings @ The Village Grille

Monthly meetings are held at **The Village Grille, corner of Hoffman and East River Drive**, Allouez. The 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.

The TAX TIMES

Brown County Taxpayers Association
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Green Bay, WI 54305-0684

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Inside This Issue

Facts regarding BCTA's actions to stop
Brown County's new sales tax
Jan Meeting Notes
Feb Meeting Notes
Things That Make Us Wonder
and more

Meeting Location

The Village Grille, Allouez

BCTA Meeting and Events Schedule – MARK YOUR CALENDARS.

Thursday - Mar 15, 2018 BCTA Monthly Meeting.
12:00 at The Village Grille, Allouez
Howard-Suamico School Dst Damian LaCroix

Tuesday - Apr 3, 2018 Spring Elections

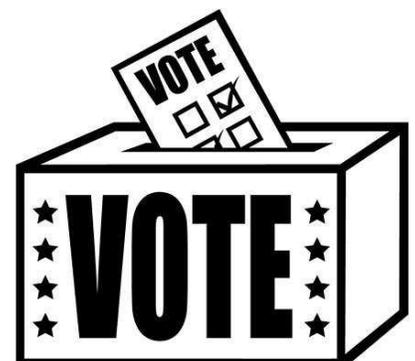
Thursday - Apr 19, 2018 BCTA Monthly Meeting.
12:00 at The Village Grille, Allouez
Brown Cnty Clk of Courts, John VanderLeest

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.

Mar - Apr 2018



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New Members are
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www.BCTaxpayers.Org
for Details.**