

Sustainability and Responsibility

Dave Nelson, Secretary

Sustainability is defined as a requirement of our generation to manage our resources so the average quality of life that we enjoy ourselves can potentially be shared by all future generations.

Sustainability is a rallying cry by those of the liberal political persuasion. They are ready at a moments notice to protest any uses of resources by businesses, units of government, or other citizens not meeting their perceptions of sustainability.

At the same time, they are passionate about leaving our borders open and allowing our country to be flooded with undocumented immigrants, many with limited skills and little or no ability to speak English. The open borders movement ignores the financial burden placed on American taxpayers from this policy. A credible source estimates a tax burden of approximately \$8,000 per illegal alien family member and a total approaching \$100 billion per year.

An open borders policy cannot be sustained for a long period without dragging down the economies of our country, our states, our cities, and our local communities. It is not sustainable and it is not responsible.

The Cloward-Piven strategy is an example of using runaway government benefits for extreme political action, going far beyond any semblance of sustainability and responsibility. Richard Cloward and Frances Fox Piven were activist sociology professors at Columbia University in 1966. They developed the Cloward-Piven strategy which included actions to weaken and destabilize units of government.

The Cloward-Piven strategy is best described as a plan for orchestrated crisis. It begins with finding

unorganized groups of people eligible for government benefits but not receiving all they can. The next action is to find new beneficiaries and/or create new benefits. The ultimate goal is to place overwhelming burdens on the targeted government welfare systems, leading to their collapse. This is a political strategy, not a genuine effort to improve the lives of the people they are purporting to help. Conversely, the ultimate goal is to set fire to ALL social structures in the United States, then assimilate them into a new globalist system. It has no component of responsibility for a sustainable future for our country.

Why do some politicians vote like they are trying to execute the Cloward-Piven strategy? Are they just pandering for votes or do they really believe our country needs to be transformed into a socialistic nation?

Another example of questionable sustainability and responsibility is the Social Security trust fund. In the years while payroll tax collections exceed payments to beneficiaries, how should the excess funds be invested?

Congress mandated that the money could only be invested in one way, in U.S. Treasury bonds, safe and secure. The cash goes to the U.S. Treasury, where it (the cash) is spent as Congress directs. The U.S. Securities (I. O.U.'s) are retained in the Social Security lockbox. The day of reckoning comes when the Social Security Administration needs the cash to pay benefits. How does the U.S. Treasury pay out cash when the Treasury securities are redeemed? The Treasury has three options: 1) tax money, 2) selling bonds (to China?), 3) print money. It can be argued that the Social Security lockbox contains a large chunk of the national debt

In terms of cash, can the Social Security trust fund be considered to be anything other than an illusion? Part of the funds could be invested in relatively safe investments like utility stocks, earning dividends on real assets that are providing real value. Can our present policy be considered sustainable and responsible for the long run?

Dave N.

November Meeting Notes

Several topics of concern were discussed by the members and directors present.

The Brown County sales tax was discussed. It is estimated to generate \$147 million in new tax collections. Concerns were expressed that projects would receive less vigorous scrutiny when funded by sales tax collections than when competing for property tax dollars.

There might be problems with college students voting both locally and at their places of residence. Photo identification has improved election integrity, but procedures for purging voter lists of voters who have moved out of the jurisdiction or are deceased need scrutiny. We will invite a knowledgeable speaker to address this subject.

There have been efforts by municipalities to remove services from property tax funding and create new sources of revenue outside levy limit restrictions. Examples include the "rain tax" and the "leaf tax." School districts use Fund 80 to pay for as much as they can to move expenditures outside the normal budget which is controlled by levy limits.

The wheel tax is a new method of raising more tax revenue, allegedly for road maintenance. It has been proposed in the city of Green Bay to replace property owner assessments for street reconstruction. Property owner assessments provide about one third of street resurfacing costs. A \$15 wheel tax has been proposed, but not enacted. Conversely, in the Village of Hobart, all street reconstruction is funded by property taxes.

Dave Nelson - Secretary

December Meeting Notes

Rick Bowers of Reading Connections, Inc., discussed his organization, it's unique approach to helping individuals read, and competing with public education for educational funds. He is a retired electrical engineer. His wife, and partner in the organization, has 10 years experience teaching reading in public schools. They recently moved Reading Connections from South Oneida Street to the Centennial Centre in Hobart.

Rick and his wife developed their system of teaching reading from their experiences helping their dyslexic son learn to read. They were told by professionals that he would not be able to be a successful reader. They took several classes on teaching dyslexic students to read. Between second and third grade, his wife was able to advance their son's reading ability to above grade level when he entered the third grade.

Rick explained that students learn to read in the first three grades. Starting with the fourth grade, they read to learn. Students must be able to read words. When a child fails to learn to read, the root cause is failing to learn how to read words. They must learn to process from left to right and from top to bottom.

Teaching reading must recognize the differences between left brain hemisphere learning comprehension and right brain hemisphere learning comprehension. Left brain dominant students thrive in orderly, structured environments. Right brain dominant students are less structured and more creative. Problems arise when left brain dominant teachers do not understand the learning needs of right brain dominant students.

Word fluency is the key to reading comprehension. If students must decode each word as they read a sentence, they will be unable to comprehend the meaning of the sentence.

It takes from six months to a year to bring most students up to grade level with the Reading Connections methodology. Reading Connections has done some work with detention center students, but in general the public education institutions have shown little interest in Reading Connections support for their remedial reading programs. It appears that they would rather fund their internal programs than retain the services of Reading Connections.

Brown County Executive Troy Streckenbach was present to express his concerns about the BCTA's legal challenge to the Brown County sales tax.

Dave Nelson - Secretary

Press Release

Brown County Taxpayers Association

January 3, 2018 For immediate release
Information: Call Rich Heidel (920) 655-3107

BCTA files legal action to stop Brown County sales tax

The Brown County Taxpayers Association (BCTA) has filed suit in Brown County circuit court seeking to stop the recently imposed 0.5% county sales tax. The suit was filed Tuesday January 2nd by the Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty (WILL) on behalf of the BCTA.

Rich Heidel, the BCTA's President, spoke to the group's reasons for taking the action:

"We disagree with the way in which this was rushed through the approval process. The County Executive announced his sales tax plan on May 2nd and the County Board rushed to approve it on May 17th, with one of the County's listening sessions scheduled for Mother's Day. During that approval process, numerous misrepresentations were made regarding how much of the sales tax is paid by non-residents. We asked County leadership to put this matter to a referendum which would have enabled thorough discussion and investigation of the proposal, but County leadership was not willing to permit the citizenry to weigh in on the matter. They were in a hurry to get their arms around that revenue stream of \$147 million. We are convinced that if this matter had gone to referendum, it would have been rejected. We want the law followed and believe that is not happening.

- First, the relevant portion of the state statute (77.70) reads as follows: **'the county sales and use taxes may be imposed only for the purpose of directly reducing the property tax levy and only in their entirety'**. Over the proposed six-year life of the sales tax, using the County's own numbers released in May 2017, the avoided property tax increases amount to less than \$20 million while the new sales taxes are \$147 million.
- Second, the County's plan attempts to use the sales tax to evade its property tax levy limit. 2005 Wisconsin Act 25 imposed levy limits on counties beginning in 2006. The amount of sales tax revenue will far exceed the revenue which would be permitted under the property tax levy limit. The legislative intent of the levy limit is to constrain spending and this action circumvents that intent. The law provides that Counties may exceed their levy limits, but it requires approval via referendum. As noted above, County leadership was too anxious to acquire this revenue stream to be bothered with a referendum.

The Brown County Taxpayers Association is a local group working to bring information and awareness to issues that affect tax policy or impose regulatory burdens.

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Things That Make Us Wonder.

Even though the next Federal election which could decide control of the U. S. Congress and Senate is still 11 months away, potential candidates have already been busy soliciting funds and trying to make themselves known. The bottom line is which political party controls our government with their own unique philosophy or manage to compromise on what is best for the country, (and possibly reward the interests which keep them in power.)

With previous administrations, perhaps it just seems that the parties, even those with large majorities, would together discuss their differences and compromise on what was best and most affordable for the country based on its merits. Now all major legislation such as tax reform, immigration, the budget and others are debated and voted upon strictly on a one-sided partisan basis. Very little of any value is accomplished for the country as a result.

Does this present day animosity go back to the fast track enactment of the Affordable Care Act commonly referred to as "Obamacare"? It is nothing new in Washington. While most people would probably agree that the nation's health care system needed some fixing, it didn't need a 20,000 page "manifesto" establishing dozens of new bureaucratic agencies, paperwork, cost

and confusion to a system already burdened with government mandates. It may have corrected a few problems but created a lot more. Any attempts at making a fresh start or effective revisions to the benefit of all has been DOA and brushed aside through partisanship.

The point we are trying to make is this. We realize the different parties have their own philosophies and goals, which is fine. However, items such as completely overhauling the established healthcare system, pushing the country deeper in debt, or for that matter tax reform, are too important to the nation as a whole for any one party to arbitrarily impose or change by itself to suit its own needs. We can think of no issues which could not be resolved to the good of the nation through discussion and compromise.

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Most of us have received and possibly paid their annual property tax statements reflecting modest increases over the previous year, and are thankful for all of the services we receive from our school systems, county and municipal governments. There are always those who want more for their money as long as someone else pays the bill.

Even though property taxes have remained fairly constant, our overall tax bill is constantly rising. DNR and DOT fees keep going up. The Wheel tax where applied will increase your auto license fees. The .5% Brown

County sales tax scheduled to start Jan. 1, 2018, could easily add \$100-\$150, or more to each family's expense. We have yet to see if the new Federal "Tax Cuts" actually cut or add taxes as opponents claim.

Noting that a rather large percentage of the area's population rent rather than own their property, we wonder just how aware they are that there is considerable cost involved with providing all of the streets, schools, police and fire protection, etc., which they enjoy like everyone else in the community. Normally the property owner is assessed the tax and passes the expense on to their renters as part of their rent. In any event, the renter should be aware they are taxpayers like everyone else.

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"Judicial Watch" claims an estimated 12.5 million illegal immigrants along with 4.2 million citizen children are costing U.S. taxpayers \$134.9 Billion per year. Major costs, being education, medical care, law enforcement and welfare. While the top states in providing aid are California, Texas, New York, and Florida, they present a hazard to everyone due to drug smuggling and terrorist connections.

While we realize there are valid exceptions to the rules we don't believe they allow for illegal entry, false identification, or

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other criminal activity.

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The U.S. Postal Service has quietly announced they will be increasing first class (and other rates) in 2018. Judging from the stacks of political and other non-solicited “junk mail” most of us receive on a daily basis, there are plenty of other ways they could improve cash flow as if that was their only problem.

Will our “Forever” stamps still be good, or will the USPS be changing the meaning of the word forever to “just a few years?.”

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Preliminary work is already beginning in Racine County on the Foxconn Complex, We sincerely hope that it lives up to its promise. It will likely be an issue in the elections later this year, and we must remember that bringing jobs to Wisconsin has always been an issue of both parties. We realize there is some risk involved, but the decision has been made. We must have some faith in our leaders and not set up roadblocks every inch of the way which seems to be the trend with politics these days.

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During the Holiday Season, we are all made aware of the many people in the area who are homeless or existing on limited incomes. The government uses a family income level to determine

poverty and eligibility for aid which can vary in various parts of the country, There are many fine organizations in this area and most of us contribute to where we believe it will do the most good.

While giving people food baskets, meals, coats and toys may be a helpful, feel-good gesture, does it do the job of removing them from the poverty status? While there are probably many unavoidable, unfortunate circumstances involved, we would assume in many cases the problem is despair, or lack of a plan to improve their financial status.

There are many great religious and charitable groups in the area that help. More importantly however, there are also a lot of sharp, connected, and concerned individuals involved with these groups such as bankers, lawyers, and other business who would probably willingly help many of these people at little or no cost. What it would take is a mechanism to have a volunteer advisor, sit down with the low income party, one on one, and discuss the problem, without prejudice, which is likely a matter of more money going out than is coming in.

Assuming a matter of poor money management or maximizing earning capacity, a qualified interviewer should be able to make recommendations regarding spending, and help the party get the training and a better paying job which are available in quantity in the area. Wouldn't work in

every case, but better than depending on handouts.

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Among other things, the purpose of most taxes, especially income, is to provide for the reasonable and necessary needs of Government, encourage growth in the private sector, and still leave individuals and families with money to spend on their own.

While these principles may have been the announced goal of each revision ever made to the Federal Tax Code, it has grown into a monster full of obscure rules which nobody really understands. One of President Trumps initiatives had been to simplify the tax code by eliminating many obscure items advantageous only to certain parties and industries, and to lower and simplify the tax burden on individuals and families. Also, for years economists have been calling for a reduction in the corporate tax rates as a way to stimulate employment.

For individuals the proposal was for a type of “flat tax” which considerably lowered the rates in the various income brackets, but offset this by eliminating many of the deductions commonly used to reduce their tax liability. For most people, it will still be more involved than a postcard sized form. The entire plan as it now stands is a 500+ page affair, and one would have to do some calcu-

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lating to determine how it will affect them and net taxes they pay, and if they are better off as a result.

Unfortunately, although their goals may have somewhat the same, the revision was drawn up by the party in power, and the Democrats have done little except find fault. They claim the rich will only get richer as a result and the middle class will end up paying more. While this could be true, the deficit will likely increase as a result of less revenue. Charities, medical deductions, and a number of other common deductions may also take a financial hit if they are no longer included as a deduction.

With Obamacare, if both parties had participated in the details without obstruction, potential differences possibly could have been resolved before rather than after, and the same is true of tax reform, Democrat and Republican constituents both pay taxes to the same government, and basically have the same interests in earning an income and living the American dream. Both parties represent

and help the less fortunate, and yes, have wealthy tax evaders.

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On second thought, why is the administration even thinking about tax reform, and using the term “tax cuts” in front of the people? According to an article on the front page of the Dec. 21, USA Today, the Congressional Budget Office estimates a deficit of at least One Trillion Dollars for the year 2018. They blame this on previous tax cuts, unexpected emergency relief due to wildfires and hurricanes, etc. This will be added to the National Debt with interest until someone who knows how to balance a budget and still keep everyone happy becomes President. Any suggestions?

What really puzzles us is that while no one in Washington shows any concern about using the Nation’s charge card to cover their careless spending, they go into panic mode and threaten to “SHUT DOWN THE GOVERNMENT” on a regular basis at budget time over some insignificant spending item they couldn’t agree upon.

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We pity the people of California, with their constant fires causing billions of dollars damage and loss of resources. They blame dry conditions and high winds as the problem. Didn’t they have torrential rains washing out dams and messing things up not too long ago? People in Wisconsin have dry spells and winds also but manage to prevent forest fires and we can be thankful. We just hope their lifestyle doesn’t raise the rates we pay for fire insurance.

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One nice thing about property taxes is that you can always request a review and adjustment against the assessment charged against you if deemed too high. Georgia-Pacific Corp, one of Green Bays largest property taxpayers has asked for a review of it’s two Green Bay facilities.

Making an assessment of a large manufacturing complex has to be the assessors worst nightmare. Production equipment and inventory aren’t included, but the land, location, and buildings are. Manufacturing paper requires many unique and specialized structures to accommodate equipment and could be difficult to evaluate except by mutual agreement between the assessor and property owner.

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As long as taxation on the value of real estate is the method of choice for payment of county

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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.

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and municipal related services, property owners have the right to know that their property is taxed on a fair and equal basis. No question. Property owned by qualified non-profit organizations, and there are many, is considered exempt even though they receive services such as fire and police protection, streets and sidewalks, etc., at the expense of other property owners.

Some of these including Govt. subsidized apartments considered exempt, and possibly others make voluntary formula based payments to the city in lieu of rent. Others may charge for services, and in a few cases, compete with privately owned business that has the property tax expense.

A recent Press-Gazette article disclosed that Aurora-Baycare, which is privately owned, had the city's largest property tax bill in the city at \$4.1 Million. However, similar and competing medical facilities in the city (hospitals) are exempt due to non-profit ownership. We assume that some compensating arrangements have been made by the other hospitals to level the playing field as \$4.1 Million is a big overhead item in a business where cost is a big consideration.

The Wisconsin Dept. of Corrections has over 10,000 employees with a \$2.4 Billion budget charged with running the state prison and related systems.

They claim to be short of help, particularly at the Lincoln Hills School for Boys which has turned into a disciplinary nightmare. The inmates are out of control and it is impossible to retain employees. While only a small percentage may be the problem, we wonder what the right solution will be?

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The National News has been obsessed lately with claims of "inappropriate behavior" being brought against certain politicians, news commentators, and other assorted celebrities. While inappropriate behavior may mean different things to different people, and the charges for the most part may or may not be true, or even have legal significance, right or wrong; the desired effect tarnishing one's reputation has been accomplished. The accused and the accusers should be aware of the facts of the case proceeding accordingly.

It is unusual that for the most part, these matters are conveniently revealed several years after

and have more political than social implication. It just seems that in this age of political correctness, interchangeable genders, and anything goes as long as it makes news.

Nevertheless, there are probably hundreds of politicians, Hollywood big shots and celebrities, plus other newsmakers sweating it out for fear of someone digging into their past for a little publicity.

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

The TAX TIMES

Brown County Taxpayers Association
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Meeting Location

The Village Grille, Allouez

BCTA Meeting and Events Schedule – MARK YOUR CALENDARS.

Thursday - Jan 18, 2018 BCTA Monthly Meeting.
12:00 at **The Village Grille, Allouez**

Thursday - Feb 15, 2018 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.

Jan - Feb 2018



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