



## Thank you, Brown County Board.

In December, the Brown County Board of Supervisors rejected efforts to extend the half-percent sales tax which is set to expire in the fall of 2015. The vote, a resounding 25 to 1, rejected a proposal to hold an April referendum on the question, and we thank the 25 supervisors for their stand-up representation of taxpayer interests.

We knew this was coming. Despite all the assurances that the Packer Stadium Tax was limited, temporary, and only for the remodeling of the stadium, many of us anticipated that special interests would seek to extend the tax when it expired. There is always a thirst for more of the public's money. In this case the amount at stake was \$23 million per year and it seemed inconceivable that the "spenders" would not make some attempt to grab it. That's why we have been resolute in our efforts prior to County elections to ask candidates to pledge opposition to extension of the tax.

Proponents of the measure did not put forth solid reasons for imposition of the tax ... instead we heard of various ways in which the additional money "COULD" be spent – projects, expanded programs, etc. Of course, the elected representatives of the County change over the years and nothing can bind future Boards/ Executives to stay on a particular path determined by current officeholders. You could hear that concern raised by many of the Supervisors during the debate – skepticism that imposing the tax would simply lead to spending increases. These comments by Supervisors reflect the views they hear from their constituents, illustrating that representative democracy is alive and well at the local level. Taxpayers at the grass roots level should feel encouraged by this!

So instead, the Stadium Tax will expire. And when it does, an additional \$23 million every year will be spent on really good things. County citizens will have more money to spend on things: Like putting new tires on the van so the family can be transported with greater safety. Like buying new books to read to the children in the evening, cultivating the kids' thirst for reading and learning. Like making necessary home improvements and upgrades, improving the quality and desirability of neighborhoods (and raising property values). Like funding educational opportunities to improve the likelihood of their kids' success.

The debate over additional taxes too often lacks discussion about the things people will do with that money if the government does not take it away. And more money left with the individual always gets spent on things which make our neighborhoods, individuals, and families stronger and better.

*Tom Sladek* – Treasurer

**Brown County Taxpayers Association**

**The BROWN COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION**  
*In our 30th Year of Promoting Fiscal Responsibility in Government.*

**Brown County Board Address. Testimony presented by Richard Parins, President of the Brown County Taxpayers Association, to the Brown County Board of Supervisors at their Dec. 17, 2014 Monthly Meeting.**

“Mr. Board Chairman, Supervisors, fellow citizens, the Brown County Taxpayers Association appreciates the opportunity for members of the Association to express and enumerate our reasoning and data we’ve accumulated against instituting an additional Sales Tax on the citizens of Brown County.

Over the proposed length of 20 years it is no stretch of calculation that you will place an additional Half-Billion dollars tax burden on your constituents. That is a half-billion dollars lost to the citizens but equally as important, to the local economy. Stated in the proposal is a “Sunset Provision” of 20 years, but aren’t we just reaching a long awaited sunset? Voters begin to ask, “when is sunset?”

When asked in 2012 during your election, many of you signed our pledge to oppose any attempt to enact a Sales Tax, PERIOD. Need we say more? In addition, we should not forget, as a second question on the ballot with the Professional Stadium District Tax proposal was a referendum about utilizing excess .05% Sales Tax” that was defeated on the same ballot while accepting the “Stadium Tax.” Aside that fact, constituents turned down this Referendum question as well as the first attempt in 1983 when after the Board passed a sales tax, retraced their steps, and reversed the legislation after the community rebelled to its passage. How many referenda on this subject are necessary? The voters have already told the Board they do not want a new sales tax. Why would Board members who claim to be neutral or against the tax, continue to talk about bringing it on a ballot?

It has been purported by some that the Stadium Sales Tax brought in an estimated \$23 million last year and were we to assume as others have stated that 30% of this figure was paid by outside visitors. This is an estimated amount of \$6.9 Million that theoretically could be added to County coffers. And we would be very grateful to those outside visitors for that money. On the calculation that it takes \$200,000,000 of sales to generate \$1 million in tax revenue it would follow by this logic that visitors are spending \$1 billion, 380 million dollars in our County annually. Does that make sense to you? We don’t think so.

The BCTA is on record and will continue to state that any Taxation Proposal deserves to be placed on a ballot in which State or National Elections are at stake- not the lesser local ballots that traditionally have reduced voter turnout. If additional polling of County residents is required, we need a full vote of County Sentiment. If proponents say that getting a readout of how the people feel about this is important, than they should support doing this on an election where turnout will be maximized. This also allows the poorest of our community, those most affected as a proportion of their income, a better opportunity to redress this regressive tax policy.

Counties with the .05% Sales Tax in most instances have higher County mill rates than Counties who do not have such taxes = this is verifiable by the State Fiscal Bureau reports. This leads our membership and likely most residents to view this tax as simply another way to reach into our pockets for someone’s pet project. The proposal as presented by Supervisor Robinson offers up four potential areas of spending, the first be-

ing “debt relief,” the history of this County’s spending and that of many other counties is simply the fact it never happens. Next is “Workforce Development”; does that mean a new program? We have a very significant State agency devoted toward workforce development, not to mention a fine Technical School System devoted to offering those same programs and training. Do we need another? New business will create new jobs. Besides our schools are entrusted with preparing our youth to enter the workforce; do we need another? Maybe a better accounting of current programs is needed.

Next, is “capital/infrastructure projects”- has not the County successfully funded a new jail, a new mental health center and a new Sheriff’s Building - all without instituting a new tax? Again, a new pot of spending becomes the more likely project. The Board has successfully met these challenges. Last is “economic development,” the perfect oxymoronic phrase for higher taxes. Get off and stay off the taxpayer business and the economy will develop in a more natural manner, not directed by Government dictates.

History has shown that residents outside the County drive straight through on our beautiful new Hwy 41 complex to shop down in the Valley to neighboring Counties who also have no additional Sales Tax. Even a few drive troughs signify one of the real markers about fair taxation-that being when perceived as unfair, the first sign is avoidance. Many economists will contend that more money spent will usually generate the growth of business and will encourage more citizens to step in to a healthy economy and create those new businesses. While this does not happen overnight a brighter future is a welcoming start to 2015.

Last but far from the least for the reasoning for new taxes is the possibility of “an independent board” charged with the management of these tax collections. Does this mean the County Board is incapable to collect and spend citizen’s money as you have for these many, many decades? We would say that on the whole, you have done a good job? Why would Board members who claim to be neutral or against the tax keep talking about bringing it back? The County has managed its budgets well, accounted for major projects and emergencies as they arise, so we ask you why now and for what real need, does Brown County require additional sales tax? This is a tax of opportunity, not need. The answer, we believe, is that no one has demonstrated a real need for this tax. We ask that you vote no until a demonstration of need is met.

Thank you for your time and attention.”

***After further testimony and discussion, the Board voted 20-6 against a motion to direct a committee to formulate questions for a possible referendum, and 25-1 against directing the County prepare a referendum on the subject of authorizing a county sales tax.***

“Don’t tax you. Don’t tax me. Tax that fellow behind the tree. . . . Russell B. Long

“Some see private enterprise as a predatory target to be shot, others as a cow to be milked, but few are those who see it as a sturdy horse pulling the wagon.” . . . Winston Churchill

“Just because we have the best hammer doesn’t mean that every problem is a nail.” . . . Barack Obama

## December Meeting Notes. *Fire Chief Litton Speaks to BCTA.*

Monthly Brown County Taxpayers Association meeting held December 18, 2014, at Titledown Brewing Co.

Green Bay Metro Fire Chief David Litton presented an overview of the department's organization and then discussed actions being taken to improve the value of services provided to Green Bay area citizens. Chief Litton joined the Green Bay Metro Fire Department in July, 2013. Previously, he had been the Fire Chief in Bolingbrook, Illinois, and has 33 years of experience in the fire service. He was a licensed paramedic for 25 years, and is a graduate of the Executive Fire Officer Program at the National Fire Academy.

The Green Bay Metro Fire Department operates out of eight fire stations. It serves the Green Bay area with five ambulances, eight engines, and two ladder trucks. The City of Green Bay signed a contract in December, 2012 with the Village of Allouez to provide fire and emergency medical services for Allouez, creating the Green Bay Metro Fire Department.

Chief Litton explained that the department is in a state of constant training. Emergency Medical Services (EMS) are the majority of calls received by the department. EMS calls are evaluated by speed and outcome. Chief Litton focused on improving time of response. Working with the 911 dispatch center, procedures were changed to immediately alert an ambulance crew when an EMS call was received, saving about two minutes. Another 90 seconds were saved by changing procedures at fire stations. In total, EMS response times were reduced by an average of 3.5 minutes, meeting national standards. This significant reduction of EMS response time was achieved without additional expense or capital investment.

Responding to a question, Chief Litton explained that ambulance service charges provide about \$2.3 million of revenue annually, although many charges are not collectible.

BCTA President Richard Parins reported that he spoke in opposition to an advisory referendum on enacting a Brown County sales tax at the December 17 County Board meeting. He identified the proposed County sales tax as a tax of opportunity not a tax of need.

Brown County Supervisor Dan Robinson had proposed the referendum on a new sales tax for Brown County to replace the 0.5 percent stadium tax when it expires in 2015. The board members voted 20 to 6 against directing a committee to formulate questions for a referendum. Then it voted 25 to 1 against directing county staff to prepare the ballot measure. Supervisor Robinson cast the lone vote in favor of the referendum.

The next Brown County Taxpayers Association meeting is scheduled for January 15, 2015 in the new Titledown expansion at 320 N. Broadway. Details on the last page of this Tax Times.

Dave Nelson - Secretary

## National Debt Update.

As of the end of December, 2014, the U. S. National Debt, has reached **\$18,045,000,000,000**. That's just a few Billion under a Trillion more than it was last year at this time in case anyone is keeping score.

At this point, the interest alone amounts to about \$522 Billion per year, which alone can add a half trillion to the debt each year to the tune of \$1,430 million daily Just like any political projection, the realization that we may have a problem here, or that income and spending policies in the future will somehow balance the budget without wrecking the economy is very unlikely.

The House and Senate recently approved the budget for next year for the Presidents signature. As expected it was reported to have included items favoring both parties, their sponsors and their interests. As usual the threat of shutting down the government unless it could be agreed upon was used, and compromise largely was a matter of you approve my spending proposals and I'll support yours.

Despite the results of last Novembers election, it seems to be business as usual in Washington. In other words, you vote to approve what my constituents want, and I will take care of you. That's the way it has always been done and the national debt will take care of itself as long as the President approves the budget. In the meantime we haven't the time to read and question 1,000 or so pages that we don't understand any more than we understand Obamacare.

Some while back, Rep, Paul Ryan who serves on the Congressional Budget Committee, proposed a budget designed to eliminate dozens of questionable budget items such as \$150 Million for the D.C. Subway, \$445 Million for Public Broadcasting, \$17 Million for the International Fund of Ireland, \$7.5 Billion to cut the Federal travel budget in half. The list goes on and on and up and up.

The point is that through the years spending has gone up without discretion. Some items are large and eliminating could produce a real savings and others are so small one wonders why they are in the Federal Budget as a taxpayer expense in the first place.

JF

Articles and views appearing in the "TAX TIMES" do not necessarily represent the official position of the Brown County Taxpayers Association. We want to encourage discussion and input on current issues of taxpayer interest and invite your comments or articles suitable for future "TAX TIMES." Please send them to the BCTA, P.O. Box 684, Green Bay, WI 54305-0684, or call Jim Frink at 336-6410. E-Mail BCTA@ExecPC.Com.

**VISIT OUR WEBSITE**  
**www.BCTAxpayers.Org**

See us on



Brown County  
Taxpayers Association

"A government that is big enough to give you everything you want is also big enough to take away everything you have," . . . Barry Goldwater

"Comedy in the age of Obama is concerned less with what is humorous than what is appropriate." . . . The National Review

## Things That Make Us Wonder.

We all realize that the USPostal Service is a money losing proposition that is unlikely ever to become self sustaining by itself. So far their most visible approach to making a profit has been to raise the price of first class postage every few years and then wonder why business volume keeps declining.

The latest proposal from the Senate in the Postal Reform Act of 2014 calls for Post Offices around the country to rent out extra space in their lobbies to other business's like banks or state agencies to sell fishing licenses.

If this idea was valid we are sure banks themselves would have used it long ago. One other problem is our understanding that most post office facilities are owned by private contractors and leased to the USPS for profit. If they could squeeze more profit from their investment it wouldn't go to the Postal Service/

What next? How about renting extra space in courthouses for private law offices or McDonalds and calling it property tax relief?

\* \* \* \* \*

Claiming poor attendance due to their out dated arena, the City of Milwaukee is trying to generate interest in building a new one even though the present is not paid for yet. While an Arena can be an asset to any city, it takes a combination of financing, parking, worthwhile events including winning teams and responsible management along with a sufficient base of customers willing and able to afford events and give support.

\* \* \* \* \*

Recently a Harvard Business professor made national headlines when he refused to pay \$4.00 more than the posted menu price for a takeout order of Chinese food. The explanation was that due to rising costs the restaurant owner had to increase prices but was unable to afford new menus at the time.

While the argument was settled amicably, if anything it possibly shows how far Harvard business instructors (*and others*) may be from reality.

\* \* \* \* \*

From what we read in the papers and hear on the news there are a lot of countries in the world who don't seem to like the United States in spite of everything we do for them.

Perhaps this is not surprising as even our own two major political parties spend more time disagreeing with and sabotaging each others initiatives than compromise and do what is good for the nation.

\* \* \* \* \*

Medicare health benefits for senior citizens is probably one of the most popular government programs. It is also probably one of the most expensive and open to fraud.

While most participants likely carry supplemental part B coverage, and end up with very little out of pocket expense for their medical related requirements.

Here's the point. At no time is the recipient asked to verify if services were performed, or even if they agree with the charges submitted. We realize that providers "*write off*" much of their stated charges. In the meantime, it usually takes several months for claims to go through the system, with the Medicare participant left with nothing to do but wait while the paperwork piles up.

We wouldn't look for any improvement in the system even if "Obamacare" becomes a reality,

\* \* \* \* \*

Even though Gov. Doyle's dream of a high-speed rail line between Milwaukee and Madison never became a reality, it could still cost the state some money. The Canadian Pacific Railway claims it is owed about \$500,000 for their work with the state in various ways while the project was being planned.

Meanwhile, former Gov. candidate and Mayor of Milwaukee Tom Barrett is seeking funding for a proposed streetcar system for the City of Milwaukee. They used to have one but it was scrapped perhaps 40-50 years ago.

Proponents claim many advantages to the plan such as eliminating traffic and downtown parking problems, and that more people are now

living in the downtown area.

Potential plans now include additional lines leading to the downtown area from other parts of the city. An accurate price tag hasn't been proposed but \$125 million has been mentioned along with a referendum to determine public interest. The Federal Govt. has promised \$54.9 Million which probably won't even cover the preliminary planning stage. It probably won't make much difference anyway as historically this type of project often leads to huge cost overruns once work begins.

Considering the potential disruption of street traffic while tracks and power poles are installed and the reality it would never pay for itself may still scuttle the project. Stay tuned.

\* \* \* \* \*

One state program which has had some success but may be phased out is the Land stewardship program. So far over 1.5 million acres have been purchased by the state for conservation and preservation which is probably good, but the land is also removed from local tax rolls and takes public funds to buy and maintain.

There has been criticism of prices paid and value of some of the purchase's, so plans apparently will be to scale back the program and use the funds for more pressing purposes.

\* \* \* \* \*

WISTAX reports that statewide in the November elections, 20 of 29, or 69% of school spending referendums were approved by voters. Also, statewide school tax assessments in the state will rise an average of 1.3% for the 2015 property tax bills.

\* \* \* \* \*

It is estimated that the Afghanistan War has cost American Taxpayers about \$1 Trillion to date, with several hundred Billion more coming when all the bills are added up. Interest on the cost so far, \$125B.

\* \* \* \* \*

While workers like to compare what similar jobs in other states pay when negotiating salaries, the cost of living elsewhere should also be considered. The Tax Foundation recently issued a survey indicating that on the

average, what you can buy for \$100 in Wisconsin would cost \$107.64 if purchased elsewhere. The only neighboring state that was better was Iowa at \$111.73. No mention was made whether state taxes were one of the criteria included in the survey,

\* \* \* \* \*

Recall that during the past several years, local, state, and the National Government have agreed that smoking is bad for ones health, and costing all of us billions of dollars in healthcare and other costs in the meantime.

Taxes on tobacco products where raised dramatically, advertising was outlawed, and finally smoking was finally banned in workplaces, bars, restaurants, and just about everyplace else except the privacy of your home.

For some reason the government is unwilling or unable to take such drastic action against drug or substance abuse even though the problems created go well beyond health related to violent crime, police corruption, tax evasion, or just about any problem we have as a society.

Governor Walker has proposed that unemployed workers pass a drug test before being eligible for unemployment benefits. Similar laws are in place around the country in efforts to prevent various welfare benefits being used to support the drug trade.

The U.S. Department of Labor ruled on October 8, that drug testing to receive unemployment benefits could only apply to occupations where drug testing was a prerequisite such as professional drivers, pilots, air traffic controllers, etc. Apparently for anyone else drug abuse is OK.

\* \* \* \* \*

Much was made of Wisconsin's job creation and unemployment rates during the November elections.

Although we aren't too far from national averages on most measures, negatives are still relatively high overall tax rates and regulations. Most of these problems go back many years and are being presently addressed.

Recently legislators in Madison have been considering having Wisconsin become a "right to work state" whereby workers could belong to a trade

union at their own option whether or not their place of employment was unionized or not. While this is a highly controversial subject, at least it is finally being discussed.

So far, about half of the states have "right to work laws", mostly located in the southern states. They claim that in most cases their job creation, especially in manufacturing in ahead of other states. Union organizers are quick to point out that wages in these states may be less than the national average, and claim the only way to boost the economy is by offering higher paid jobs in union shops.

While that may be true, we note that many of the employers who have packed up and left, or at least not expanded operations in Wisconsin in recent years have had conflicts with their unionized workers.

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The Maciver Institute for Public Policy reported in a study comparing tax policies in neighboring states, concluded that most of Wisconsin's neighboring states have a lower overall tax burden than here. Their conclusion was this was causing people to move elsewhere, Florida in particular, taking along an estimated \$136 million in adjusted gross income tax receipts.

The report also disclosed that of the countries 60 largest cities, Milwaukee elementary school teachers have the highest salaries at more than \$70,000 a year.

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Some people claim that raising the national minimum wage to the \$10.00 range would be the answer to poverty. Some states have already done this on their own.

We acknowledge that it is not possible to raise a family or even exist on much less than that. However, most people working make more than that amount already. It is difficult to criticize someone for sticking with a low paying job unless it is intended as supplementary or as a stepping stone for experience and advancement.

You can't expect employers who are labor intensive to accept higher wages unless the quality of the

product increases accordingly.

\* \* \* \* \*

Has anyone else been disturbed by the high number of phone calls identified on your caller ID as "800 Service, Out of Area, Name Unavailable, or Anonymous?"

When our politicians established the "Do not call list" in order to give us privacy, they made sure they themselves were exempt, and included charities to make it look OK.

Most of us do not like being intentionally rude when answering a phone but are also capable of deciding where to spend our money without being harassed by a professional solicitor begging for his share.

If the answer is more laws, at least make it one not full of annoying loopholes.

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."*

"Tact is the ability to tell someone to go to hell in such a way that they will look forward to the trip."  
 . . . Winston Churchill

"Don't go around saying the world owes you a living. The world owes you nothing. It was here first."  
 . . . Mark Twain

"Leaders are responsible not for running public opinion polls but for the consequences of their actions."  
 . . . Henry A, Kissinger

"Any fool can criticize, condemn, and complain and most fools do."  
 . . . Benjamin Franklin

# The TAX TIMES\$

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## The TAX TIMES\$ - January, 2015

### BCTA Meeting and Events Schedule – MARK YOUR CALENDARS.

Thursday - Jan. 1, 2015. HAPPY NEW YEAR !

Thursday - Jan. 15, 2015. BCTA Monthly Meeting. 12:00 Noon. \*  
Speaker-Brown County Executive Troy Streckenbach.

**Note** - Effective with this meeting, BCTA monthly meetings will be held in the "TAP ROOM" located in the Tiletown Annex, the former Larsen Cannery opposite Tiletown Brewing. You may enter from 320 N. Broadway, or from the Tiletown parking lot to the door marked "TAP ROOM", and up the ramp.

Thursday - Feb. 19, 2015. BCTA Monthly Meeting. 12:00 Noon. \*  
Program to be announced.

Thursday - Mar. 19, 2015. BCTA Monthly Meeting. 12:00 Noon. \*  
Program to be announced.

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

Unless otherwise notified, BCTA monthly meetings are held the Third Thursday of each month, 12:00 Noon, at Tiletown Brewing Co Annex TAP ROOM. 320 N. Broadway.  
**Meetings are open to the public.**

**BCTA Members, their guests and other interested parties are cordially invited to attend and participate in our open discussions.**

COST: \$8.00, Payable at meeting. Includes lunch, tax & tip.  
Call Tom Sladek – 499-7701 for information or to leave message.

## January,



## 2015

"A government which robs Peter to pay Paul can always depend on the support of Paul."

. . . George Bernard Shaw

"Talk is cheap, except when Congress does it." . . . Will Rogers

## 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](http://www.BCTaxpayers.Org)**  
**for Details.**