
The TAX TIMES

November,
2009

Newsletter of the "BROWN COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION."

Volume 25, Issue 1

Reform reflux.

"A changing world demands that we modernize and improve the way that we deliver education to our students." – Diamond Jim Doyle

There he goes again. Anybody got a Zantac? Mr. Business-As-Usual Doyle proposing more education "reform," ie. ways to funnel more money into WEAC's greed grasp. We, the BCTA, asked Legislators, as I imagine did others, why isn't Wisconsin slopping at the Stimulus trough? This time it is part of the state's application for the Almighty O's "Race to the Top" program, a sort of education bailout/stimulus/no-bid contract bonus. Jimmy's plan includes program requisites like tying teacher salaries to student performance, allowing year-round classes, and adopting national standards for assessment testing.

And not satisfied with amputating two legs of the 3-legged stool, he proposes to pinch off the revenue caps like a hemorrhoid. He and his Democratic wrecking crew axed the QEO in the last budget, giving him administrative leave to axe 2/3 funding, which is now roughly 59%, forcing hefty property tax hikes all over the state, including a reported average 7.1% hike in the Fox Valley. Just read the headlines, School Budgets in trouble!, all political news blogs overflow with these stories, Taxpayers ask, where's the Money?

Diamond Jim says it would give districts more flexibility with funding. The good news is, the 'Race to the Base' application has yet to be submitted, so there is time to elect some grown ups to the legislature. Meanwhile, taxpayers face 10%, 11%, as much as 12% increases in School costs, even as some enrollments have decreased, so what's up? The curious part is links teacher pay to student performance. Democrats and WEAC have locked elbows against this for years and now the Almighty O demands it. But hey, they'll agree to anything for more money.

WEAC is a business and businesses want pricing power, so if they don't get something more for their members, they won't have the leverage to raise dues and pour money into their anti-conservative PAC, many of whom are their teachers, members who object to constant tax increases. This situation, the conflation of teacher intent, is the perfected definition of conundrum, eh?

And it's dicey for a Republican/Conservative to attack WEAC, because it looks like they're attacking teachers, no, excuse me, "the Kids." WEAC uses teachers and students as a human shield, a harsh but accurate parity. Everything WEAC does is for the excellent teachers and the deserving children, but even this comment is open to argument when you determine that the students most harmed are not the affirm or less able, but the smartest, the group with the greatest potential.

Doesn't this demonstrate the survival of the most able versus the need to satisfy the notion of Beelzebub be in the details? Notice Diamond Jimmy did not propose any specifics to this pay-for-performance link, which will require legislative approval. This makes it easier for his Constituent Relations specialists and campaign hacks to soothe angry teachers when they call opposing the link. Play both ends to the middle definition (place here!)

I can hear the toadies now: "Well, ma'am, Republicans forced the President to include a "link," and we agreed in order to leverage this extra money for you. After we have the funds, we can make this link as loose as we want. . . . No, you'll never have to teach to the test."

And this one-time federal bonanza is bound to beget some recurring expenses, and with the 3-legged stool scooting around on stumps like Eddie Murphy in "Trading Places," we shall never grow nostalgic for Deficit Days. Glory be to Obama in the Highest!

Jesse Funk, an Appleton resident, told a reporter how sick he was of schools defaulting to levy hikes instead of making cuts to cover deficits. "No other company gets to go back to taxpayers and say, 'You guys make up the difference.' We are starting down a path where taxpayers are burdened with every shortfall." Jesse, my dear friend, I feel your pain, man. But we are not "starting" down that path. We have worked that path into a rut, like mules lashed to a grinding wheel, forever treading the same vicious circle. Now, for the "Good news," got some?

Neenah School official Kandis Sullivan lamented, "There were not opportunities to make reductions in staffing or make major reductions in programming." Maybe if you ever tried making a "major reduction in programming," you might find nobody notices and it wasn't "major" after all. Try cutting something, anything sometime. Nothing personal to teachers, but paying my third grade teacher another 20 grand a year would not have made me any smarter. Teacher pay just doesn't matter like home life. Home rules performance in schools, and the loss of the QEO has now pitted the education community against their neighbors, Diamond Jim played it well, sidestepping responsibility under the guise of freeing teachers from the QEO yoke. What a joke.

Diamond Jim's "reform" don't make no sense, no how. They take more money out of family's checkbook and give it to WEAC, who will run ads seeking more money, which they will use to buy more ads, seeking more money. I recently watched Victor Hugo's Les Miserables and we galleon slaves will turn the mill rate, anchor wheel, ever faster, until we all flail under the lash like Jean Valjean, screaming Stop, No, No, Stop. . . !

I've got reform reflux, how about you? And I know what to do. Take a zantac and elect budgeteers who are willing to engage fiscal responsibility!

Richard Parins – President

The BROWN COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION
In Our 25th Year of Promoting Fiscal Responsibility in Government.

Perspectives of the Village of Hobart.

Federal and state budgets and mandates often cause problems which are passed on to the municipalities where we live and work and pay taxes. The Village of Hobart in Brown County is no exception and wrote a letter to Sen. Feingold which they shared with the BCTA outlining their concerns. The Village also has a unique problem in that they share their boundaries with the Oneida Tribe of Indians. With permission we are printing excerpts from their letter to illustrate their problems. The complete letter is available from the Village of Hobart, 2990 S. Pine Tree Rd., Hobart, WI 54155, 920-869-1011.

Dear Senator Feingold,

We appreciate your recent invitation to our Board of Trustees to offer views from our local perspective. No doubt, our views share commonalities with many other local governments; nonetheless, we take this opportunity to highlight our most pressing concerns:

Federal Unfunded Mandates. We note a correlation between diminished revenues from the state to local governments, and increased unfunded federal mandates imposed upon states. Local government is the on-the-ground delivery system to your constituents. We local elected public servants often incur the anxieties of citizens for decisions made beyond our paygrade. Then we have to preserve the public health, safety and welfare with annually diminishing resources resulting from decisions made at upper echelons. This is certainly no news to you, Senator, but we perceive a growing hostility and anger amongst the citizenry, the most recent example of which is the fractious Town Hall meetings taking place across the nation. We are witnessing similar outburst of citizen anger and resentment in Hobart.

Village of Hobart – Oneida Tribe Relationship. In Hobart, the Oneida Tribe of Indians of Wisconsin has acquired over 5,000 acres (of Hobart's taxable 19,000 acres). This is one fourth of Hobart's property tax base, and is an expanding process. The tribe has currently removed 1,581 acres from the local property tax base, and placed the re-acquired lands into federal (tax-exempt) trust. The tribe has also submitted an additional 2,673 acres of fee-patent (taxable) land for acceptance into federal trust. Hobart objects to the tribe's removal of any more land from the Village's property tax base.

A recent Hawaii ruling (*details in complete letter*) is now a support tool for states desiring to affirm their sovereignty, once benignly acquiesced for political correctness with tribal governments. This appeasement practice is especially rampant in the State of Wisconsin. Hobart and numerous other communities in Wisconsin are experiencing excessive property tax erosion, business closures due to competition from tax-exempt tribal businesses, and environmental regulatory disputes arising from unwillingness of the State of Wisconsin to assert its sovereignty as a protective measure for the entire state economy.

Jurisdictional Conflicts. It is disconcerting that local county and municipal governments, subdivisions of States organized under the federal Constitution, are in an ongoing defensive posture against private, race-based, congressionally recognized governments. In an excellent paper penned by former Nevada Attorney General, Frankie Sue Del Pappa, it was noted that tribal sovereignty is intended as a shield to prevent intrusion of other governments into the private and self-governing authority of Indian tribes; tribal sovereignty was never intended to be a sword by which small tribes would wield economic and political harm upon co-located or neighboring local governments.

American Resource and Recovery Act – Stimulus Fund-

ing. The Village of Hobart is a 33-square mile municipality with nearly 6,000 residents, including about 900 tribal residents. The annual operating municipal budget is approximately \$3.2 million. In contrast, the Oneida Tribe's annual operating budget is \$527 million, for a government whose only duty is to its small enrolled population that live in this community. The Village is a full-service municipality charged with the public safety and general welfare of its residents, including each of its tribal residents. Municipal services include a court, police department, general services, utilities and snow-plowing of 164 lane-miles through all the hard winters of Wisconsin. Hobart's full services operate efficiently within a frugal \$3.2 million budget.

To offset a foreseeable loss of one-fourth of its property tax from tribal lands placed in federal trust, the Village has developed a major mixed-use commercial/residential area upon 603 acres immediately adjacent to State 29/32, our northern boundary. Hopefully this project will create literally thousands of short-term construction jobs, and over 4,650 permanent jobs at full build out. We are moving forward with the project using the principle that to the greatest extent feasible we will utilize local businesses, suppliers, contractors and developers to sustain our Hobart and neighboring community economies within the Green Bay region.

Immediately next to this project Wisconsin DOT has proposed major upgrades including diamond interchanges and overpasses. Hobart and WisDOT have formed a partnership to link Hobart's job-creating Centennial project with WisDOT's transportation upgrades. Hobart has previously applied for stimulus funding because the Centennial Centre at Hobart is entirely "shovel-ready" with all pre-planning tasks completed, and shovels in the ground bringing sewer/water to the site.

Nonetheless, Hobart has not been fortunate to receive any federal stimulus funding to augment its \$3.2 million general operating budget while developing thousands of new businesses and jobs, and 950 new affordable homes. The Oneida Tribe has received over \$6.8 million in federal stimulus funding to supplement its \$527 million operating budget, and is on target to receive more than \$21 million more quite soon. Even the State of Wisconsin found an extra \$2 million for the Oneida Tribe, in spite of a \$6.6 billion deficit, to give to the Seven Generations, Oneida's business conglomerate.

Senator Feingold, we feel that there is something wrong with the picture just described. The local government (Hobart) constitutionally charged with the general welfare and public safety of its residents gets zero stimulus funding; but a wealthy private tribal government having duty to a small population (approximately 2,200) within Brown and Outagamie counties has already received \$6.8 million, and is lined up for many, many more millions. Hobart also lacks the congressionally sanctioned monopoly of gaming as an alternative revenue source. We believe that something is upside down, given this lopsided allocation of stimulus funds. This contributes to the growing dissatisfaction with Congress of our residents.

Compound what appears to be federal favoritism to tribal governments with unfunded mandates imposed upon local governments, mix in apprehension about future of the economy, national and local healthcare discussions, and it is easy to see why we local elected officials are caught in a catbird seat watching our residents gear up to hold accountability where it belongs: with Congress.

Signed: Hobart Village Board of Trustees.

Auto Insurance Rates Rise.

Many state residents have recently received letters from their auto insurance providers that state how changes made by the legislature will affect their rates.

Because of the changes to auto insurance, rates are expected to rise dramatically, likely between 33 and 43 percent. Now we find out motorcycle premiums will rise even more. Because of medical payment coverage changes motorcycle premiums are expected to rise by over 500 percent. This was not known at the time of the budget debate.

Before these changes over 90 percent of all claims were covered under the minimums that existed prior to the passage of the budget in Wisconsin. In 2007, the average bodily injury claim in Wisconsin was \$16,600 and property claim was \$2,500. Minimums prior to the changes in the budget for these types of claims were \$25,000 and \$10,000 respectively.

Why would these changes be sought if the overwhelming amount of claims were already covered under current law? And why would the legislative majority seek minimums so high Wisconsin's will be the highest in the nation? The blame seems to rest with the Democrats and their special interest trial lawyer allies.

You only have to look at campaign contributions to know the story. Trial lawyers donate to Democrats overwhelmingly and stand to reap millions in court settlements with these new changes. Governor Doyle received \$262,000 from trial lawyers alone.

Assembly Majority Leader Tom Nelson said on October 7, that the changes were requested by insurance providers, blaming them for the insurance increases. You can draw your own conclusions.

Newspapers have criticized this legislation. The Appleton Post Crescent called these changes, "the wrong idea for the state" and the Janesville Gazette stated, "Many [drivers] likely would drop their policies, leading to more uninsured motorists and driving up costs for those who have insurance."

To add insult to injury, in the budget was a change in state law that will mandate automobile insurance coverage beginning on June 1, 2010. Prior to this mandate, Wisconsin was on average with the rest of the nation in the number of drivers not carrying insurance (15 percent). With these added insurance costs, many drivers will take their chances and drive without it. This will put more drivers at risk of a catastrophe in the event of an accident or of being charged a \$500 fine if pulled over. Presently, insurance providers use ZIP codes to establish premium rates, which helps determine their risk factor. Now, Democrats from Milwaukee are throwing around the idea of eliminating the ability of insurance providers to use zip codes as one factor in setting insurance rates.

It is no wonder the Wisconsin Business Climate is rated among the worst in the nation.

Rep. John Nygren

Economic Stimulus Funds Mostly Used to Protect Government Jobs.

You may recall that back in February, Congress hastily approved a \$787 billion stimulus package with no scrutiny or debate under the argument that we had to rapidly infuse cash into the economy in order to stop and reverse our economic downturn. Recently, Governor Doyle and the Office of Recovery and Reinvestment (ORR) released a preliminary report detailing what effect those federal stimulus dollars have had on Wisconsin's economy.

The federal economic stimulus bill awarded \$1.92 billion to Wisconsin. However, eight months after the fact, we've only received about 1/3 of the money. Wasn't the whole point of the stimulus bill to get money into the economy rapidly as a "fix-it-now" approach? I fail to see how our economy is getting stimulated now if the federal government is still holding on to 2/3 of the money. Congress insisted the stimulus money was necessary to create jobs, and if that's true, then Wisconsin residents need to see action now, not six months or a year or two from now. According to figures released by the Department of Workforce Development, 235,900 Wisconsin residents are unemployed, and 124,400 of those jobs have been lost over the last year.

The ORR report detailed that the \$680 million it spent over the last eight months has created or saved 8,284 jobs in Wisconsin. Approximately 6,100 of those jobs were in the public-sector. That means that 73% or nearly 3 out of 4 jobs saved or created with your tax money were government jobs. Sadly, what these numbers also show is that the economic stimulus funds have done very little to stimulate private-sector job growth. Only 2,184 jobs were created or saved in the private sector, or just 27%.

Unfortunately, creating more government largess is not going to get us out this economic downturn or out of our budget deficit. We need more private-sector businesses and jobs that can create a positive tax base and revenue stream. It's going to require a lot of legislative changes to get us to where we need to be. Directing economic stimulus dollars to private-sector jobs is one way to start.

Rep. Karl VanRoy

Celebrating our Silver Anniversary.

It was 25 years ago, 1984 that a group of business owners and concerned citizens held a series of meetings at the Chamber of Commerce office to organize what became the Brown County Taxpayers Association. We are pleased to say we are still "*Promoting Fiscal Responsibility in Government.*"

If you recall at the time, the Brown County Board of Supervisors had recently voted to become the first county in the state to impose the newly authorized optional .5% County Sales Tax. Further recall this was done with little public debate or consideration of the impact on local business establishments. Many of us were shocked.

Community outrage soon caused the county board to seek permission from the state to reverse their decision and with the exception of the special Lambeau Field tax we are one of the few counties in the state not burdened with a county purpose sales tax.

We have remained active through the years and believe serve an important role in the community. Our main focus is on local and state taxing issues, but we are concerned with government waste on all levels and providing responsible services for your tax dollars.

Thank you for your support. **Jim Frink - BCTA**

"The urge to save humanity is always a false front for the urge to rule it." . . . **H. L. Mencken**

"You may deceive all the people part of the time, and part of the people all the time, but not all the people all the time." . . . **Abraham Lincoln**

"Success is the ability to go from one failure to another with no loss of enthusiasm." . . . **Winston Churchill**

School Budgets in the Green Bay School District *or* Why Modern Math makes everything rosier!

- 20 Days is all it takes to display a massive budget (over 300 pages) and get it passed.
- A budget that affects every Homeowner and business in the District
- A budget that represents the largest portion of our property tax bill.
- A budget which received the sole public input of 3 individuals in a total time of 9 minutes and which only served to delay the vote by that period of time.
- A budget based on the total absence of any questions by the board pertaining to “another” viewpoint. Not one revision was made, and not one suggestion made by the public speakers was followed.

It is “ The Perfect Budget.” Our gratitude for such outstanding work should not go un-recognized!

There is an old saying, that the “devil is in the details”. The School District spent \$ 220 million dollars last year and have budgeted for a \$ 242 Million dollar plan this year. Only in the halls of Academia can this be recognized as a 5.1 % increase, and not a 10 % increase in spending.

Lets be fair now, The Federal Government has bestowed \$ 9 Million of “Stimulus” money on our fair District, so the real local budget is \$233 Million. Last year, the district spent 220 Million so 233 over 220 is “only” a 6 % increase.

But wait! The district collected \$228 Million from the taxpayers last year -- \$8 Million more than they needed. Where is it? Well it was placed in the “Fund Balance “ Account, which is a sort of rainy day “cash” fund Schools use to even-out revenue and expenses.

Schools need this account, and must have one, but note; there has never been a problem with this fund in the past. It is similar to your checkbook balance, except in this case, the balance that has been around 22 to 25 million dollars for the past few years, and it has now suddenly increased to \$32 million or more. There is no need for this level of Cash money !

So the Actual Spending was \$ 220 Million and now it’s planned at \$233 million. That is a real increase of spending and budget of 6 % excluding Stimulus money.

The BCTA asked the School Board to return the \$8 Million surplus from 2008 to the taxpayer, and to reduce the 2009 budget to a more reasonable \$237 million. We were ignored. Not even a question about our basis or assumptions for our recommendation. No discussion. Ignored.

When you create a responsible budget, you project future costs based on current real costs. Basing future expenditures on erroneous projections from last years budget, and not

“An unlimited power to tax involves, necessarily, a power to destroy; because there is a limit beyond which no institution and no property can bear taxation.” . . John Marshall
 “Why is it that our children can’t read a bible in school, but they can in prison?” . . . Thought for the day.

from a known updated cost, is very irresponsible to a normal citizen.

In a Nutshell

Last Year

2008 Reported Expenses	\$ 220 Million
2008 Surplus (over taxation)	\$ 10 Million

This Year

2009 Budget	\$ 242 Million
2009 Stimulus	\$ 9 Million
2009 Total without Stimulus	\$ 233 Million

Difference from 2008 actual and 2009 Planned.

2009 Total w/o Stimulus	\$ 233 Million
2008 Actual Expense	\$ 220 Million
Planned 2009 spending	\$ 13 Million + 6 %

Tax Levy last year(2008)

Tax Levy in 2009

Increase in Tax Levy

\$73.8 Million
 \$ 77.5 Million
 \$ 3.7 Million ---
Unnecessarily?

In these difficult times for Residents and Taxpayers, we have a School District and Board who are prepared to spend (242 – 220=) \$ 22,000,000 more than they did last year, and keep \$8 million of surplus taxpayer money without justification. We do not expect the schools to become banks by stashing away taxpayer money or using imaginary budgetary assumptions, but unfortunately it appears that is exactly what is happening.

Rich Carlstedt - BCTA

National Debt Update.

On November 1, 2009, the U. S. National Debt had reached a total of **\$11,846,648,450,811**. That’s Eleven point eight Trillion bucks, up 54 billion since last month at this time.

That equates to **\$38,638** for every U. S. resident. They didn’t say if they included illegal immigrants or not, but it probably doesn’t make much difference. However, since not every resident pays taxes, they figured that each taxpayer owes about a **\$109,676** share of the debt. Just put in on your credit card.

Actually that’s the good news. The \$11.8 Trillion is only the amount which is bonded or covered by other obligations. Since all of the stimulus money which is supposed to fix the economy hasn’t been issued as yet, it is not included.

The real scary part is the unfunded debt, estimated at \$106 Trillion. This consists of \$14 Trillion for Social Security obligations, \$18.5T for Prescription Drugs and \$73.5T for Medicare. Pres. Obama claims his health plan will not raise the debt He also may not know what comes after a Trillion.

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 appreciate your comments E-Mail BCTA@ExecPC.Com.

Things That Make Us Wonder.

LEAVE IT TO RIO.

While we can probably agree that it would have been nice to have Chicago host the 2016 Olympics, the odds are the cost (to taxpayers) could likely exceed the monetary benefits.

The story is that Chicago has already spent more than \$100 Million in preparation and promotion not counting \$1.4 M from taxpayers to send Air Force One to Denmark and back. Unfortunately just about every city hosting the Summer Olympics has lost hundreds of millions and Chicago already is deep in the hole.

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THE OLYMPIC EXPRESS.

One big spending program which was counting on the Chicago Olympics is a high speed rail line between Milwaukee and Madison. Proponents say it would be necessary to carry people back and forth to see possible bicycle races held in Wisconsin during the two week event.

The projected cost of such a project goes up every time it is mentioned. Governor Doyle likes it because there might be Federal funds available.

While this may become a reality in the future, let's hope accurate projections are given to the cost, where the money will come from, and who if anybody will ever use it.

Right now if it were prioritized with other spending proposals it should fall between more windmills and ethanol plants and well behind schools, highways, bridges and doing something to preserve the business and manufacturing we still have.

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CREDIT TO SENATOR FEINGOLD.

We credit Sen. Feingold for criticizing Pres. Obama for appointing a number of "Czars" to serve in his administration. These are people appointed to establish and administer various areas of government policy, and being appointed by the President do not require Congressional approval for their appointment or actions.

This power has been used by previous administrations. Sen. Feingold maintains that this authority should be the responsibility of Congress as established by the Constitution.

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GETTING OUR SHARE OF THE POT.

Wisconsin has a long history of sending more money to Washington than is returned. We receive \$7,132 per person compared to a national average of \$8,904, and rank 48th nationally.

Some of this may be due to the fact there are few large federal institutions such as military bases or other institutions in the state. Also, it was pointed out that the state's heritage of independence from government help has discouraged aid.

Perhaps this will change as the dust settles on the various stimulus programs which have everyone from the state down to local governments and school districts holding their hands out for federal aid to cover their budget shortages.

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WELCOME TO AMERICA.

Sooner or later Pres. Obama and Congress will have to tackle the problem of illegal immigration. Probably next in line after the health care issue is resolved. The President is said to favor amnesty, which could be a disaster if allowed as it could be placing politics over national security.

One problem is that there does not seem to be a system of tracking who and how people enter the country and where they go and what they do once they are here. No other country in the world is as wide open.

Last year 2.9 million foreign visitors with temporary visas entered the country but never officially checked out. There are an estimated 11 million illegal immigrants in the country but nobody seems to know for sure.

According to a *New York Times* article, homeland Security was supposed to be taking care of the problem after 9/11 but admit nothing they have tried so far seems to work.

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WISCONSIN TAXES STILL HIGH.

According to *Wistax*, Wisconsin state taxes take about 12% of personal income from its residents, which is the 12th highest in the nation. This does not include federal taxes or local property taxes, which will increase dramatically due to reductions in state aids and forcing more costs on local governments as

a result of the state budget.

Big problem is that the states average personal income has dropped and it was already less than the national average

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DO THEY REALLY MEAN IT?

The Wisconsin Dept. of Tourism paid an ad agency \$57,000 to come up with the slogan "Live like you mean it", to lure tourists to the state. So far they haven't figured out what it means in relation to attracting visitors and are probably going to look for a new slogan. Any suggestions?

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SHARING THE PAIN.

State and local unionized employees recently held a rally at the Capitol to protest their problems with budget cuts by units of government which were effecting them. They claimed that tax loopholes and tax breaks for the wealthy was to blame.

No doubt this is also the reason that 10% of our workers are unemployed and Wisconsin's reputation as a high tax state and a poor place to do business.

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CLEANUP WILL COST EVEN MORE.

Supposedly the experts had everything figured out before they committed \$400 Million into cleaning up the Fox River.

Now the Corp of Engineers has been ordered by the U. S. Dept. of Justice to halt plans to dredge the Fox River for shipping as it might stir up more contaminants. Cleanup plans also may include placing sand and gravel over areas where PCB's have been removed which could make the river too shallow for shipping.

However this plays out, a number of large local industries depend on the port facilities for their business operations.

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LEGAL BILLS OR SCHOOLS?

Let's hope that Green Bay and Brown County include sufficient provisions in the upcoming budgets to cover legal fees over and above what their staff attorneys provide.

There have been a number of lawsuits against the city and county including \$330,000 in legal fees for the city in efforts to resolve the Younkers' condemnation. There is also the matter of a \$6.4 Million settlement.

We realize that legal advice and

following the law is a part of government but payment comes from the same source as snow removal, police and fire protection, roads and schools.

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WHY THE COURTS ARE CROWDED.

We all seem to agree that tougher laws against drunk driving were in order.

One problem however is that the burden on the court system could be increased dramatically at time when it is already overburdened due to the state budget.

Another factor effecting the court system workload could be the fact the Gov. Doyle rewarded his lawyer supporters by inserting in the state budget a mandate that motorists carry higher liability limits on their personal auto insurance.

While this may be an adjustment to the cost of living, it will also make it more appealing to bring about lawsuits in the case of injury. Also putting more pressure on courts.

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THE HIGH COST OF INSURANCE.

On the subject of courts and lawyers, have you noticed an increase lately in TV ads by personal injury law firms promising to obtain huge insurance settlements from insurance companies if you are involved in an accident. Sort of like winning a lottery and retiring.

Funny you never see ads offering to represent and defend you in the event you are the defendant.

Must be more money lin looking for accident victims.

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PLOW SNOW OR FILL POTHOLES?

Cuts averaging 10% to county budgets has employees in some state counties suggesting they may not be able to adequately plow snow during the coming winter.

There are probably other jobs they could cut back on if they really tried.

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WHAT'S IN YOUR WATER?

The DNR has announced that it wants to regulate 15 possibly new substances environmentalists have found in our water they claim harmful to humans.

This includes compounds found in pesticides and industrial processes. Will this create more rate increases "for our benefit?" Isn't the water in Wisconsin

supposed to be the best already?

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WORSE THAN PARKING METERS?

The City of Oshkosh is removing all of their parking meters which should be good news to motorists. Officials determined that maintaining the meters was costlier than the revenues they created.

The bad news is they will now use a confusing system of color coded parking spaces and lots to reserve and authorize permits and leased parking which will also be subject to violation fines.

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STIMULATING JOB CREATION.

On Oct. 15, Governor Doyle praised the federal stimulus money sent to Wisconsin claiming that \$680 Million of the funds were used to create or retain a total of 8,248 in the state as a result. He failed to mention that about 75% were state and local government jobs saved by the federal cash or that this equates to a total of \$82,444 per job.

He also failed to mention the 300,000 or so Wisconsin residents who were unemployed. At that rate it would take about \$24.7 Billion in federal funds to put everyone in the state back to work. In any event, we are sure Gov. Doyle would be able to spend the \$24.7 Billion.

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WISCONSIN LAW SCHOOL 101.

The Princeton Review has named the University of Wisconsin law school the 8th out of 172 in the nation for having the most liberal students.

This would mean that 7 other schools are even more liberal and 164 aren't quite so bad.

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SPEED READERS NEEDED.

House Speaker Polosi has promised a 72 hour waiting period from the time a final health care bill is available and the time Congress votes on it. This to give the public a chance for review.

The bill presently contains about 163,000 words and is 1,000 (now 2,000) pages long. No doubt amendments and changes will be made up to the last minute as more benefits and health café provider payoffs are added.

Many in Congress are opposed to the idea because they claim most people wouldn't understand it anyway and

this would only make for further delay.

They are probably right in that respect but the question is if the Congressmen themselves actually will bother to read and understand the language, much of which is inserted by other than Congressmen themselves.

While we acknowledge that some changes may be in order for our health care system, do the people who are clamoring for it really know what it is all about?

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UPDATE ON CIGARETTE TAX.

Wisconsin's high cigarette tax is benefiting one group of citizens: those selling cigarettes in northern Illinois.

A carton of cigarettes sells there for \$15.00—\$20.00 less than in Wisconsin and business has increased 35-40% since the last tax increase. This is Wisconsin's loss in business and tax revenue.

Something else is fishy. One of the excuses for the huge tobacco tax increases was to discourage smoking.

No doubt this is a factor for many people, especially if they don't live near the Illinois border. However, state funding for the "Tobacco quit line" which was supposed to benefit from the tax increase was cut by the governor 55% in the budget, from \$3.7 Million to \$1.2 Million. Total anti-tobacco programs were cut from \$15.3 million to \$6.9 million. The balance goes to the general fund.

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SPEAK OUT ON BUDGETS.

This is the time of the year when our local units of government are preparing their budgets for the coming year. As usual, the county is proposing to cut jobs and teen court, the school district is proposing to cut programs, consolidate schools and reduce energy costs. They have yet to put a price tag on how much if any money could be saved if they proceed to consolidate the two west side high schools.

It is important to attend public budget hearings and be heard. More people attend these meetings to protest proposed budget cuts than to show concern over tax increases as a result.

Regardless, the combination of the state budget, sluggish economy and inflation will result in local budgets that will cost us more but give us less.

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SUPERVISORS GET OUSTED.

This summer, the Monroe County, WI, County Board voted to construct a \$26.7 Million justice center against the wishes of the majority of the counties residents.

A citizen taxpayers group was organized, a recall election was held, and seven supervisors who supported the project were voted out of office.

The newly organized board will now work on an alternate plan.

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FEINGOLD AGAINST SPENDING?

Senator Feingold has announced a "Control Spending Now Act," which he claims contains 40 provisions to control federal spending and reduce the deficit.

This sound great, but how many spending bills were there in the Senate during the senators tenure that he didn't vote for along party lines?

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BAIL OUT THE POST OFFICE?

As long as they are bailing every one else out with borrowed money, Congress is proposing to give \$4 Billion to the U.S.Postal Service. Trouble is, much of their deficit is of their own making. Poor personnel management and antiquated work rules and procedures.

If Congress and the USPS were really serious, they do what they are claiming to do with other bail out situations. Establish rules and oversight of use of the funds top protect taxpayers interest.

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TAX RELIEF FOR NEWSPAPERS?

Citing economic hardships and job losses in the newspaper industry, a bill is being proposed in the legislature which would give tax breaks (including property tax exemption) to newspapers.

We realize that due to a number of factors the important newspaper business has fallen on hard times. We read that the states largest paper, the *Journal/Sentinel* has had an 11% drop in circulation during the last six month alone..

Unfortunately many key industries have had trouble competing lately, and one simple reason is that they are facing higher expenses on less revenue. Property tax relief or a stimulus handout would be a big help not all qualify. There

are situations now where tax exempt entities compete with those who pay their share and it causes unlevel playing fields.

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LEGALIZING MARIJUANA?

As long as most of us can remember, we have been spending millions of taxpayer dollars and police time fighting the problem of marijuana as an illegal and dangerous drug, Now Gov. Doyle has said he would be "open to legalizing it for medicinal purposes."

States that have taken this step may have had no problems but I am willing to bet the idea is promoted more by recreational addicts than pain sufferers.

Maybe the governor just sniffs another source of tax revenue.

* * * * *

DON'T TAX MY BEER!

Special interest groups seeking state funding are salivating at the idea of increasing the Wisconsin beer tax "just a little" to provide revenue. This tax hasn't been raised for years and would discourage drinking, they reason.

So far the legislature is saving this tax increase for the future which is probably OK with most people,

In recent years the price of a glass of beer at the bar has kept pace or exceeded inflation. A tax that even added a penny a glass would probably amount to a quarter to the consumer after the seller blamed it for other business cost increases, and this really wouldn't go over too well in Wisconsin.

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STATE REVENUE DECLINES.

The Department of Revenue has disclosed that the states two largest revenue sources, individual and sales taxes are behind 2008 levels and considerably less than budgeted. These are true economic indicators, and prove that you can budget spending but you can't always budget income.

* * * * *

STATE SELLS CLUNKERS FOR CASH.

The *Chicago Tribune* reported that Gov. Doyle ordered the sale of 500 older state owned automobiles as a cost cutting measure. Although the first ones sold brought an average of \$2,962 per, the total savings with replacement cost is

projected to be \$8 Million, plus fuel.

Don't worry, the state will still have 5,536 cars left for employees to use if they want to visit you.

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THE OLD FASHIONED WAY.

One large item in the state budget has been the outsourcing of engineering consultant work on state highway and building construction jobs. The high cost of completing state financed building over private construction in another concern.

A recent *Press-Gazette* feature article related how the present Green Bay Correctional Institution was constructed in the early 1900's with the use of inmate labor. They did virtually all of the work in an era before heavy equipment was commonly used. There was little said of their working conditions but chances are that inmates made use of the skills they learned and stayed out of trouble after their release. How times have changed.

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INDOCTRINATION BY LEGISLATION.

As usual, lots if things to wonder about.

Jim Frink

"Things That Make Us Wonder," consists of thoughts that occur to us, mostly taxpayer related in some way from current news events. We use only 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 to include in this section of the "TAX TIMES."

VISIT OUR WEBSITE

www.BCTaxpayers.Org

Email, BCTA@ExecPc.Com

"Wisconsin's problem is not that we tax too little, it's that we spend too much. My mind will be open to every solution except one. We should not, we must not, and I will not raise taxes."

The TAX TIMES

Brown County Taxpayers Association
P. O. Box 684
Green Bay, WI 54305-0684

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Inside This Issue

Reform Reflux.
Perspectives of the Village of Hobart.
Auto Insurance Rates Rise.
Economic Stimulus Funds Mostly Used
to Protect Government Jobs.
Celebrating our Silver Anniversary.
School Budgets in the Green Bay School District
or Why Modern Math makes everything rosier!
National Debt Update.
Things That Make Us Wonder.
and more.

The TAX TIMES - November, 2009

BCTA Meeting and Events Schedule – MARK YOUR CALENDARS.

Thursday - November 19, 2009. BCTA Monthly Meeting. 12:00 Noon.
Titletown Brewing Co., "Frost Room."
Scheduled Speaker - Reid Ribble, 8th District
Congressional Candidate.

Thursday - December 17, 2009. BCTA Monthly Meeting. 12:00 Noon.
Titletown Brewing Co., "Frost Room."
Speaker/Program to be announced.

Thursday - January 21, 2010. BCTA Monthly Meeting. 12:00 Noon.
Titletown Brewing Co., "Frost Room."
Speaker/Program to be announced.

NOTICE: All candidates and incumbents for public office are cordially invited to attend our open meetings and

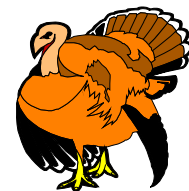
Unless otherwise notified, BCTA monthly meetings are held the Third Thursday of each month, 12:00 Noon, at Titletown Brewing Co., 200 Dousman St.

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 Jim Frink – 336-6410 for information or to leave message.

Novem- ber,



"Politics is the gentle art of getting votes from the poor and campaign funds from the rich by promising to protect each from the other."

. . . Oscar Ameringer

"Nothing just happens in politics. If something happens you can be sure it was planned that way."

. . . Franklin D. Roosevelt

SUPPORT THE BCTA

**New Members are Always
Welcome. Call 336-6410
Write us at P. O. Box 684
or visit our website**

**www.BCTaxpayers.Org
for Details.**