



## More Money In Your Pocket.

The additional county sales tax to pay for Lambeau Field renovations was implemented fifteen years ago. As you read this, you are within a few weeks of seeing the tax come to an end. Most people thought this would never happen. That's understandable since the long term history of taxation supports the notion that taxes only rise, and never go away. But in this case a tax will expire and not be replaced. That's somewhat remarkable and worthy of exploring the question: "why"?

Fifteen years ago, believing that imposing a tax in support of a mega-million dollar entertainment business was wrong, the BCTA fought the creation of the tax. We were outspent 200 – 1 by tax advocates, and a very close referendum approved the tax. Because of the significant opposition, the tax advocates needed to pledge again and again that the tax was limited in application and duration. Fifteen years later those assurances made it very difficult for those same people to advocate for extending the tax. Net, the fight against the tax paid some dividends years after the battle. What can be learned from this is that it is wise to stand and fight for your principles even when you may not prevail in the current battle – as the value of your efforts can produce downstream returns.

Over the ensuing 15 years, the BCTA never dropped the matter. At every election of county representatives, we reminded candidates of the promised temporary duration of the tax and asked that they pledge opposition to any attempt to extend it. Thankfully county candidates responded by pledging opposition and living up to those pledges when the time was right. When tax advocates attempted a few months ago to open the door for extension of the tax, the County Board overwhelmingly voted to keep the door closed. The takeaway here is: on matters of fundamental importance be relentless in pursuing your cause.

Lastly, the BCTA has continually done due diligence on the issue. We have always been thorough and analytical about matters of taxing and spending. When tax advocates recently sought to re-open discussion of extending the tax, and made the claim that 30 percent of the tax is paid by outsiders, we were in a position to challenge that claim as wildly exaggerated. None of the advocates has been able to substantiate the claim. However someday we'll probably hear it again and we'll be prepared to expose it as fantasy. The learning point? Always be willing to dig into the details – do your homework.

The tax ends this month, and county residents will have a little more money in their pockets. Money to save, or invest, or spend on things important for their families. That is a good thing.

BROWN COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION.

*Tom Sladek* — Treasurer

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

## The Night Watchman - Part Two.

In the previous TAX TIMES, we included the epic of the night watchman intended as a hypothetical example of how government agencies get started, and in many cases, their only purpose is self preservation at taxpayer expense.

In our conclusion, however, we forgot one point to the story we wanted to make. Most of us probably agree that many government agencies are top-heavy with personnel, short on efficiency, and completely clueless on how to operate within a budget. They have the luxury of submitting their proposed spending for the coming year, often with disregard to what they realistically intend to actually accomplish.

In private business you first have to be able to earn the money you want to spend.

While serving as an example of how government bureaucracy grows without hindrance, the example of the unfortunate night watchman is but one of the tools used to keep growing and wasting our money on foolishness.

Our National Debt is now in excess of \$18.3 Trillion, and will likely surpass \$19 Trillion within a few months. This has doubled within the last 10 years, and what do we have to show for it? The largest reason after excessive spending is accumulated interest on the unpaid balance increasing the total due by over a billion dollars each and every day. Even the Federal Government can buy a lot with a Billion dollars, but adding unpaid interest to the bill is a bad investment no matter how you look at it.

Within a few months Congress will likely again be debating raising the debt limit, this time to \$19 Trillion. While a balanced budget is a concept which has long been thrown out of the window, our new president, whoever he or she may be, will be well off to bring some financial planning skills to the office.

During the past several debt raising debates, the procedure has been to limit access to our National Parks and monuments, and perhaps lay off a night watchman or two. While this obviously gets publicity from the sympathetic media resulting in the public demanding we keep the government running regardless of cost, it reminds more of a child throwing a tantrum because his parents wouldn't buy an ice cream cone they know he shouldn't have.

The problem is not the cost of running our National Parks, maintaining our many historic sites, or keeping a few thousand night watchmen on the payroll at taxpayer expense. It is not maintaining a strong defense to protect our country and the rest of the world. It is not about providing education, healthcare, public safety, meaningful employment and a good life for all, and it is not about protecting the environment, preserving, preserving our resources. Unfortunately, it is all of the above.

Some day perhaps our elected officials will realize they have made too many campaign promises through the years, and are finally realizing you can't be everything to everyone. Complications include making unrealistic budgets, allowing excessive deficit spending, cronyism, excessive overruns, too much overhead, improper spending priorities, a poor chain of command, politicians without business experience placed in charge of key departments, the list goes on and we wonder why.

While all Federal spending contributes somewhat to the problem, it is not the only cause. Like a well run private business, it is the people in charge who establish the rules and set the examples also determine the bottom line.

**Jim Frink - BCTA**

## National Debt Update.

On August 31, 2015, the U.S. National Debt stood at about \$18,367 Trillion. Although their growth rate in total debt has slowed somewhat, only up about 100 Billion since our last report in July, it is still going in the wrong direction.

It was discouraging we didn't hear any of the candidates address this issue during the recent Presidential debates. Not even Mr. Trump who stranger to large debt and seems to have an answer for all of our problems. Unfortunately this is not something you can build a wall around and hope it will go away by itself. The interest alone is the biggest item contributing to the total.

It does not seem to take much these days to cause a big drop in stock prices, or simply create uncertainty. A poor retail sales or earnings report will often do the trick. The so-called crisis in Greece had everyone on edge and China is always a question mark.

Investments in stocks is what funds most retirement plans, both corporate and individual, and all too often government policy can hinder rather help. Profits are a necessary evil to stock prices, and not always helped by government interference including regulation and excessive taxation.

Where interest rates may be heading is another factor which could have an effect on the National Debt. We went through a rather long period of interest rate decreases initiated by the Federal Reserve. While this may have made our Presidents look like economic geniuses, we have reached the point where they can't go much lower. Also, and unfortunately this has caused every one from individuals to countries to borrow with little regard to how, or when they will pay it back somehow.

It has also discouraged saving money as an investment and a prudent practice as a reserve for future needs.

For some time the Federal Reserve has been threatening to raise interest rates to level things off, but this again has put Wall Street in to a spin. Sooner or later interest rates will go, perhaps dramatically, and all the money owed around the world will be more expensive.

That's where our grandchildren will come in.

**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](mailto:BCTA@ExecPC.Com).

"What we learn from history is that we haven't learned from history."

. . . Benjamin Disraeli

"You can tell more about a person by what he says about others than what you can by what others say about him."

. . . Audry Hepburn

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**[www.BCTAxpayers.Org](http://www.BCTAxpayers.Org)**

Like us on



**BROWN COUNTY**  
Taxpayers Association

### July Meeting Notes.

Monthly Brown County Taxpayers Association meeting held July 16, 2015, at Tiletown Brewing Co.

Dave Steffen, State Representative from the Fourth Assembly District, represents the villages of Howard, Ashwaubenon, and Allouez. presented his plan to return over \$17 million in excess collections (about six months of revenue) from the Brown County stadium sales tax district.

Steffen is a freshman legislator, first elected to the Assembly in November, 2014, running on a platform of fiscal prudence. He related that the Stadium Tax collections are schauled to end in September of this year.

The bill he is preparing is Assembly in early fall. Bipartisan support is developing for the proposed bill. The goal of the bill is to get these funds back to taxpayers as soon as possible.

It would take the excess collections from April to September and split it between Brown County and the municipalities within Brown County. Brown County would receive 25 percent of the funds and the remaining 75 percent would be distributed to the municipalities based upon their respective populations.

The funds would be designated by the bill for property tax relief, paying down debt, or for economic development. Within these guidelines, the municipalities would each determine the best uses of this one time source of funds.

Representative Steffen noted his service as trustee for the Village of Howard, which has no debt. **Dave Nelson - Secretary**

### August Meeting Notes.

Monthly Brown County Taxpayers Assn. meeting held August 20, 2015 at Tiletown Brewing

Brian Simons, Executive Director of the Brown County Library System, spoke about the current library system budget requirements and system needs. He noted that per capita library costs for Brown County citizens are lower than for the Madison, Kenosha, Racine, and Marathon County library systems. These library systems serve similar populations. The Brown County library System has a \$6.8 million budget which amounts to just over \$25 per county resident.

Facing a \$330,000 budget shortfall to meet the County Executive's target for the library system for 2016, he found \$50,000 to cut, leaving a \$280,000 budget deficit. This led to the proposal to close the Southwest Branch Library, which met with strong resistance. In fact, it led to a proposal for a \$248,000 expansion of the Southwest Library. Even with the tight budget situation, the library is trying to do more for businesses. It has extensive access to data bases that can be searched. 10,000 texts can be accessed.

Brown County Clerk of Circuit Courts John Vander Leext, who took office in January of this year, reported on his efforts to control costs of the Clerk of Circuit Courts Office while continuing to provide good service. He noted that in 2012, 2013, and 2014, the office was roughly \$300,000 over budget. For 2015, he anticipates that shortfall to be cut in half. He is crosstraining staff to make more efficient use of office personnel.

Don Pridemore, President and CEO of WINNER, Inc., spoke about the importance of the election for State Superintendent of Schools in April, 2016. Although this race will receive little media attention, it is very important because the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) has more taxpayer dollars flowing through it than any other state agency. It is important that that we shine the light of transparency on the DPI. For that purpose, the WINNERwi.com website will provide budgets, salaries, job descriptions and other important agency statistics that will keep voters and taxpayers informed as to where their tax dollars are being spent.

Mr. Pridemore discussed Common Core, noting that he believes it is a tool for federal government control of education. He is a former Wisconsin legislator and he was a candidate for State Superintendent of Schools in 2012.

The next BCTA meeting will be Sept. 17, at Tiletown Annex. Speaker Tim Lewis from the Green Bay Police Department. **Dave Nelson - Secretary**

"The person who follows the crowd will usually go no further than the crowd. The person who walks alone is Likely to find himself in places no one has ever seen before." . . . **Albert Einstein**

"The most terrifying words in the English language are: I'm from the government, and I'm here to help." . . . **Ronald Reagan**

"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**

"A nation that is afraid to let its people judge the truth and falsehood in an open market is a nation that is afraid of its people." . . . **John F. Kennedy**

"Everything is changing. People are taking the comedians seriously and the politicians as a joke." . . . **Will Rogers**

### Things That Make Us Wonder.

One of the regular features in the TAX TIMES has been the "Things That Make Us Wonder," with comments, both good and bad with a grain regarding current news and items of interest, generally of taxpayer concern in some way or other.

The procedure I use is to clip articles, take notes, or copies of events during the month, and comment on them at random when preparing the TAX TIMES. There is an lot going on these days and I usually have double the material I can handle. This issue was no exception.

Since we only publish bi-monthly during the summer, I had over 4 pages representing about 30 hours of material all typed up and ready to go, including comments, on the Milwaukee Arena deal, the Presidential debates, Renard Island, government mandates, Gerrymandering, and just about everything else in the news.

Unfortunately, we are always in a rush to get this to the printer each month, and having no formal computer training but a lot of buttons to push I managed to erase everything I had done to date.

With the choice of jumping from the Frigo Bridge or making the best of what I had I chose the latter. Sorry about that.

**Jim Frink - Editor**

# The TAX TIME\$

Brown County Taxpayers Association  
P. O. Box 684  
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## Inside This Issue

More Money in Your Pocket.  
The Night Watchman - Part 2.  
July Meeting Notes.  
August Meeting Notes.  
National Debt Update.  
Things That Make Us Wonder.  
And more . . . .

### The TAX TIME\$ - September, 2015

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

Thursday - September 17, 2015. BCTA Monthly Meeting. 12:00 Noon.  
Speaker: Tim Lewis - Green Bay Police Dept.

Thursday - October 15, 2015. BCTA Monthly Meeting. 12:00 Noon.  
Program to be announced.

Thursday - November 19 2015. BCTA Monthly Meeting. 12:00 Noon.  
Program to be announced.

Thursday- December 17, 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."

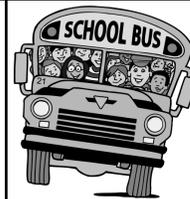
#### **Meetings are open to the public.**

**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.

**LUNCH WILL BE A HALF SANDWICH, PASTA SALAD & BEVERAGE.**

Call Tom Sladek – 499-7701 for information or to leave message.



September,



2015

"A fool and his/her money are soon elected." . . . Will Rogers

"I learned early on if you don't want your memos to get you in trouble, just don't write any."  
. . . Dick Cheney

#### **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.**