

FAIR - AND - ADEQUATE

close tax loopholes

protect public structures

control property taxes

The Institute for Wisconsin's Future newsletter on tax policy

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State legislative proposal paves the way for better public transit system

Legislators representing Milwaukee, Racine and Kenosha counties unveiled the Regional Transit and Jobs Investment Act. The proposal, developed by a coalition of area legislators with Gov. Jim Doyle, allows local governments to choose to make mass transit service improvements and creates a pathway to additional regional transit cooperation and connectivity. The bill integrates the **KRM** (Kenosha, Racine and Milwaukee) commuter rail line with other mass transit and continues the car rental fee for the project.

According to a press release from the office of Sen. John Lehman, major employers in southeastern Wisconsin are supporting the bill and projections of the impact of transit investments such as the **KRM** rail line indicate thousands of jobs, and more than \$500 million in economic activity could result.

<http://dailyreporter.com/blog/2010/01/19/legislators-roll-out-regional-transit-and-jobs-investment-act/>

<http://www.transitnow.org/RegionalTransitJobsInvestmentActIntroduced.htm>



A lot has changed since 1957- except key tax policies...

Statewide meeting will look at out-dated property tax exemptions



It is harder and harder to maintain programs at the municipal, county and school district level because of growing revenue shortfalls. Cuts in state aid have forced greater reliance on local property taxes. However, a growing volume of property tax exemptions for various large property owners (such as large non-profit medical centers like Aurora) have shifted taxes onto owners of homes and small businesses.

IWF is working with local officials, union leaders and research specialists to convene a discussion to consider solutions to these local revenue challenges. Closing local loopholes is at the top of the list. The conference is February 19 in Madison. It is intended primarily for leaders from local governments (municipalities, counties, school districts) and from local revenue alliances. If you are interested, contact [Joe Fahey](#) at (414) 967-1682.

Wisconsin criminal prosecutors on the chopping block



Due to state budget shortfalls, assistant district attorneys across the state may receive pink slips. No one knows when or where the ax will fall but the consequences are not good news for communities.

Sheboygan County District Attorney Joe DeCecco announced that if his attorneys are cut, their office will stop prosecuting many misdemeanors. "The irresponsible fiscal policies of the State, and its refusal to address a critical shortage of needed prosecutors around the state over the last decade, have led to this dire consequence," he said in a news release.

Ozaukee District Attorney Adam Gerol said "We cannot handle our caseload with less than we have. Obviously, if there's some adjustment to our workforce, our work load will have to change."

Losing even one position would mean a slower road for victims awaiting justice, Outagamie County District Attorney Carrie Schneider said. "How do I balance one victim against another?" Schneider said. "I can't, and for the victims, it's the most important thing that's going on in their lives."

Waukesha County District Attorney Brad Schimel also said something would have to give if he loses one of his 15 full-time assistants. Waukesha County has grown by 100,000 residents since 1990 and complicated new crimes such as identity theft and Internet sex crimes have become a big problem. However, his office has three fewer prosecutors than in 1990. "We're trying to get public support for simply not cutting us any further," Schimel said. "We understand it's a tough budget year. But none of these prosecutors is getting fat at the public trough." Most haven't had raises in years, and the state last year added a surcharge to utility bills to pay prosecutors.

<http://www.jsonline.com/news/wisconsin/82656457.html>

<http://www.thenorthwestern.com/article/20100128/OSH0101/301280105/District-attorneys-await-layoff-notices>

<http://www.sheboyganpress.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/201001260402/SHE0101/1260415>

<http://thecrimereport.org/2010/01/26/wisconsin-prosecutors-face-layoffs-caseload-crises/>

Letter from Oshkosh taxpayer who wants to get his money's worth

Dear Madam:

An alert reader of the Oshkosh Northwestern recently wrote a [letter to the editor](#) that helped me see the injustice of the real estate property tax bill you sent me last month. It appears that you expect me to pay for services I did not use in 2009. Please inform the staff at City Hall, (They do a great job; they are always professional and efficient.) that I will not pay the inflated amount you expect me to.

Your bill shows that I owe about \$970 to the school district. This figure is much too high. My sons attend only two of the 13 grades the schools provide. Furthermore, they only use one of the district's 21 buildings! My calculations show that I owe \$7.18 for schools, given that my children use such a small part of what the district offers.

I visited the city's website. (Kudos to your staff! It was clear, up-to-date, easy to navigate, and I found the budget figures I needed very easily!) The pie chart on page 17 of the budget shows that a total of 37.8 percent of the city's budget goes to the police and fire departments. Since I was neither a crime nor fire victim in 2009, I am reducing my payment to the city by the same percentage which comes out to \$416.30. Looks like Community Policing and fire prevention education are really paying off!



See the whole wonderful letter by Tom Wallendar at:

<http://www.thenorthwestern.com/article/20100127/OSH0602/1270387/1190/OSH06/Commentary-Property-taxes-on-the-ala-carte-payment-plan>

Oshkosh crowd tells school board to raise taxes, not cut budget

The message to the Oshkosh school board rang loud and clear:
Raise taxes. Don't cut the budget any more.

A crowd of about 150 parents, teachers and concerned Oshkosh residents packed into a commons room at West High School for a public forum on upcoming spending cuts as high as \$5 million. About 30 people spoke out against budget cuts that would close schools and layoff teachers.

Nobody spoke in favor of any cost savings options presented by the district. "I think we need to speak up because I think (the school board) may not realize how much support there is for paying more for education," said Jean Erdman, a University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh professor who had three children graduate from the district.



Full story at <http://www.thenorthwestern.com/article/20100106/OSH0105/100105160/Crowd-tells-school-board-to-raise-taxes--not-cut-budget>

Reality check on fantasy link between tax policy and employment level Results - No connection at all!



Some candidates may want to blame tax reform for job loss. They seem to have forgotten that Wisconsin is part of a global recession, a real explanation for the state's high unemployment. The conservatives promise tax cuts will lead to more jobs. Like putting your molar under a pillow waiting for the tooth fairy, it's wishful thinking.

The conservatives point their blame finger especially at a 2009 tax reform known as combined reporting which passed a decade after it was first proposed by Republican Gov. Tommy G. Thompson. This closed many of the loopholes large corporations use to avoid paying Wisconsin corporate income tax. If combined reporting were responsible for job loss, then the employment performance in the 23 states that require combined reporting would be worse than in the 27 other states without combined reporting. This is not the case.

The facts are clear: State tax policy has no connection to state employment levels. Read the whole story at:

<http://www.jsonline.com/news/opinion/83069532.html>

NEWSBREAK - Milwaukee business leaders call for higher taxes!



Business executives are often big supporters of the anti-tax crowd. Unless, of course, it's a tax that falls heaviest on lower-income people while funding a play activity for the executives.

Thus, *The Business Journal* of Milwaukee reports that prominent corporate executives want to extend the Miller Park sales tax past its expiration date in order "to help fund a new basketball arena." The story notes the difficulty in financing a new public arena given the "current anti-tax political environment."

Well who are the biggest cheerleaders for the "anti-tax environment?" The same execs who now want a regressive tax—the sales tax—to fund a new arena, which is only needed, experts agree, because the current Bradley Center doesn't have room for enough luxury suites for corporate rentals. C'mon guys, how about generating revenue for public structures that are a tad bit more important than a basketball arena?

The story can be found online at: <http://milwaukee.bizjournals.com/milwaukee/stories/2010/02/01/story2.html?b=1265000400^2801251>.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

In these difficult times of economic turmoil, State Senator Ted Kanavas found time to introduce a [Senate Joint Resolution](#) that **"the ancient Macedonians were Hellenes and that the inhabitants of the northern province of Greece, Macedonia, are their Hellenic descendants."**

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