

A monthly review of Wisconsin government, taxes and public finance

The Wisconsin Taxpayer



In this issue:

This is an excerpt from the July 2002 *Wisconsin Taxpayer*, which was devoted to major election issues. Recent Wisconsin trends in corrections expenditures and crime are discussed here.

Election 2002: Challenges Ahead

As the 2002 elections draw near, candidates should be addressing the pressing problems Wisconsin faces. State funding of K-12 and higher education is one issue. The rising costs of health care and the state's correctional system also need attention.

On November 5, 2002, Wisconsin voters will choose a governor and new legislature. These elected state leaders will face many challenges in the years ahead. Last month's issue of *The Wisconsin Taxpayer* focused on "big-picture" items such as changing demographics, Wisconsin's economy and state-local fiscal policy.

This issue addresses education (both K-12 and postsecondary), health care and corrections. The state faces other challenges, but space limits consideration to these pressing topics. More detailed examinations of some of these topics are available from recent WISTAX research. Details on how to obtain this research can be found in the June *Wisconsin Taxpayer* or on our website at www.wistax.org.

TRENDS IN CORRECTIONS

A large increase (285.6%) in Wisconsin's corrections expenditures in the 1990's is part of the reason state spending rose substantially during the period. Wisconsin's prison population nearly tripled over the past decade, from an average daily population (ADP) of 7,009 in fiscal 1990-91 to 20,447 in 2000-01.

Faced with a rapidly-growing prison population, the legislature authorized the construction of new prisons and, ultimately, approved transferring inmates to out-of-state prisons. In July 2002, the Department of Corrections (DOC) reported that 4,001 inmates were housed in contract facilities, including 66 inmates in federal institutions and 3,363 in private prisons operated by the nation's largest private prison firm, Corrections Corporation of America: 1,147 in Minnesota; 1,450 in Oklahoma; and 766 in Tennessee.

Since 1990, Wisconsin has embarked on one of the most ambitious prison-building programs in the nation. Correctional facilities were opened in Racine (1991), Black River Falls (1996), Prairie du Chien (1997), Racine (1998), Boscobel (1999), Redgranite (2001) and Milwaukee (2001). In October 2001, the state purchased a medium-security prison near Stanley in Chippewa county for \$79.9 million. The facility, which was com-

pleted in the fall of 2000, has 750 double-occupancy cells, as well as 120 single-occupancy segregation cells and six infirmary cells. It is expected to open in January 2003.

A \$51.2-million, 750-bed, medium-security prison in New Lisbon is expected to open in January 2004. In addition, the state is converting the Highview facility at the Northern Wisconsin Center for the Developmentally Disabled into a 300-bed medium-security geriatric facility for male inmates. It is also expected to open in January 2004.

Population and Spending Trends

As shown on the back page, general purpose revenue (GPR) expenditures for corrections in 2000-01 totalled \$804.4 million, up 285.6%, or an average of 14.4% annually, from 1990-91. The state's ADP rose 191.7% during this period, or 11.3% annually. The number of offenders supervised in the community under probation or parole also rose markedly, further increasing corrections expenditures.

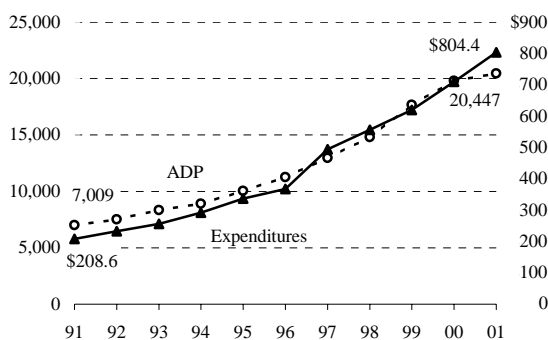
The large increase from 1995-96 to 1996-97 resulted primarily from the transfer of juvenile corrections from the state Department of Health and Family Services to the DOC. The juvenile corrections program had expenditures in 1996-97 of \$92.2 million. From 1996-97 to 2000-01, corrections expenditures rose 62.8%, or 5.0% annually.

Crime and Incarceration Rates

The state's rising prison population largely reflects changes in criminal laws, particularly for drug offenses, rather than increases in violent crimes. In the 1990's, the legislature enacted a series of mandatory minimum sentences, criminal penalty enhancements and new criminal laws, leading to the increase in the state's prison population.

Crime Rates. According to the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), the state's

ADP and Corrections Expenditures
1990-91 to 2000-01 (Expenditures in Millions)



violent crime rate (violent crimes per 100,000 population) fell steadily from 264.7 in 1990 to 236.8 in 2000. The property crime rate went from 4,130.4 to 2,972.3. Wisconsin's violent crime rate in 2000 was 53% below the U.S. average; its property crime rate was 18% below.

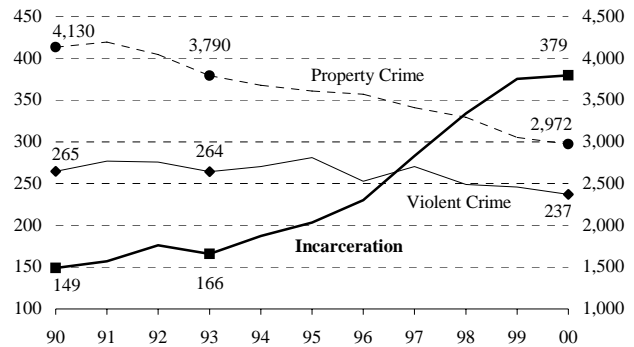
Incarceration Rates. Wisconsin's incarceration rate was 379 per 100,000 residents in 2000. In 2001, it was 383, or 18.5% below the U.S. rate of 470. However, from 1993 to 2001, Wisconsin's rate soared 131%, nearly four times the U.S. rate.

Wisconsin has typically ranked near the top among the 50 states in incarceration rate of blacks. In mid-2001, it led the states with 4,058 black inmates in prison or jail per

100,000 black residents. Nationally, there were 2,209 black inmates per 100,000 black residents; the incarceration rate of blacks was six times higher than that of whites. □

Crime Falls, Incarceration Rises

Wisconsin Crime and Incarceration Rates, Fiscal 1990 - 2000



Voter Resources

For those wishing more in-depth discussion of election issues, *The Wisconsin Taxpayer* (WT) and *Focus* (F) are excellent resources. To provide citizens and candidates an opportunity for a deeper understanding, the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance offers three packets of previously published work. Each packet is \$5.00, or all three can be purchased for \$12.50. The packets are:

Economy/Demographics

Wisconsin's Eroding Personal Income (WT), Wisconsin's Labor Shortage (WT), Wisconsin's Wealth Gap (F) and Population Projections Tell Much (F).

Fiscal Issues

Snapshots of State Fiscal Health (WT), Federal Spending in Wisconsin (WT), Wisconsin Finances in a National Context (WT), Public Spending Trends Recapped (F), State Spending Insights (F) and How High Are Wisconsin Taxes (F).

Education/Health Care

Declining Enrollment (WT), School Surpluses (F), Wisconsin Tuition (F), New Educational Finance Findings Surprise (F), UW Dropouts (F), The Giants of State Street (F) and BadgerCare (WT).

Yes, I want to read more about the issues facing the Badger State.

Enclosed is \$ _____ for _____ reading packets (selected at right) at \$5 each or 3 for \$12.50, plus tax.* Please mail my packets to the address below.

- Economy/Demographics
- Fiscal Issues
- Education/Health Care

Name & Title _____

Organization _____ Phone _____

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