



Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance

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WISTAX Marks 75 Years of Service to Wisconsin Citizens *Wisconsin Taxpayer Magazine Sports New Look*

MADISON—Sound policy research and citizen education remain the cornerstones of the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance (WISTAX) as it celebrates its 75th year. The nonpartisan organization marks its anniversary sporting a new look for its *Wisconsin Taxpayer* magazine and publishing a special issue entitled “75 Years of Citizen Education.”

In 1931, then-Governor Philip F. La Follette sought the advice of Wisconsin business leaders on falling tax revenues and the rising need for emergency relief for unemployed workers. The result was the creation of the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance in February of 1932.

From the Depression era until today, citizens, state and local officials, and civic and business leaders have turned to WISTAX for straightforward analysis of policy issues and fiscal challenges. In an unassuming way, WISTAX plays an active role in defining and shaping Wisconsin policymaking and in contributing to the state’s economic health.

Over the years, the legislative and executive branches of state government under both Democrats and Republicans have called upon WISTAX and its staff to participate in studies and serve on boards or commissions examining fiscal management, school finance, government organization, and similar issues.

Realizing its credibility would be compromised if it advocated a political point of view, WISTAX has remained nonpartisan, nonprofit, and independent. Serving the entire state, the organization operates on a limited budget, with a small staff, relying on annual donations from individuals and local officials, firms, foundations, and unions to support its respected research, civic talks, classroom lectures, press interviews, and a host of publications that keep the public informed.

“I am struck by the dramatic change at the state and local levels over the past eight decades, yet how little our mission has changed,” said Todd A. Berry, who is in his 14th year as WISTAX president. “The advent of powerful computing and the Internet have made our work easier and more productive, yet we remain committed to fair and nonpartisan research, and passionate about promoting citizen education in an easy-to-understand manner.”

WISTAX reports in 2006 covered a wide variety of topics, including lottery and casino revenues [“Playing the Odds: Gaming in Wisconsin,” *The Wisconsin Taxpayer*, January 2006], the effects on school districts of expanding open enrollment [“Open Enrollment in Wisconsin Schools,” *The Wisconsin Taxpayer*, March 2006], and the state’s standardized testing of public school students [“Student Testing in Wisconsin,”

(over)

The Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance, founded in 1932, is the state’s oldest and most respected private government-research organization. Through its research, publications, civic lectures and school talks, WISTAX aims to improve Wisconsin government through citizen education. Nonprofit, nonpartisan and independently funded, WISTAX is not affiliated with any group—national, state or local—and receives no government support.

The Wisconsin Taxpayer, September 2006]. Regular reports examined property taxes, total taxes, Wisconsin's tax ranking (compared to surrounding states and the nation), and budget and spending topics.

WISTAX researchers are sometimes asked to study an entire industry, as they did this past fall with Wisconsin's agricultural industry ["Wisconsin Agriculture: Then and Now," *The Wisconsin Taxpayer*, October 2006], or to examine the state economy on a county-by-county basis, which resulted in the report "Two Wisconsins: An Economic Puzzle" [*The Wisconsin Taxpayer*, August 2006].

In its commitment to citizen education, WISTAX publishes a monthly magazine, a semimonthly newsletter, annual reports titled *SchoolFacts*, *MunicipalFacts*, and *Measuring Success: Benchmarks for a Competitive Wisconsin*, as well as a pocket income tax guide and a legislative directory.

Reinforcing its educational mission, the statewide nonprofit also produces *The Framework of Your Wisconsin Government*, the state's only school text on state and local government in Wisconsin. The book has been widely used in public and private schools throughout the state, and has been the official text for Badger Boys State and Badger Girls State.

WISTAX also offers a free school lecture service for middle school and high school classes that covers such topics as the political process, state finances, and the importance of individual participation in our representative system of government. Staff also make frequent presentations to service clubs, community groups, and professional and business organizations.

"The Alliance founders believed that an informed citizenry was vital to a representative government, and that an unbiased source of information about government was needed; today, WISTAX is as committed to that end as it was 75 years ago. To celebrate our 75th anniversary, we are asking friends and supporters to make one-time endowment gifts or estate pledges to ensure that we can continue our needed work for another 75 years," President Berry noted.

For a free copy of *The Wisconsin Taxpayer*, "75 Years of Citizen Education," write WISTAX, 401 North Lawn Ave., Madison, WI 53704-5033; e-mail wistax@wistax.org; visit www.wistax.org; or phone 608.241.9789. □

(Editor's Note: An electronic version of this release is available at www.wistax.org.)