



Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance

401 North Lawn Avenue • Madison, WI 53704-5033
www.wistax.org • 608.241.9789 • fax: 608.241.5807

NEWS

Contact: Todd A. Berry
608.241.9789 or wistax@wistax.org
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Wisconsin Ranks 11th in Total Government Units with 3,120 WISTAX Report Shows Towns Most Common

MADISON—Wisconsin has 3,120 units of government according to a new report from the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance (WISTAX), which compares the number of municipalities, school districts, special districts, and counties in Wisconsin and other states.

Among the 50 states, Wisconsin ranked 20th in population, 25th in land area, yet 11th in number of government units in 2007. The 10 states with more government units were usually more populous and often larger in land area. California, Texas, and New York were larger on both scores, but relative to population all three ranked in the bottom third of states in number of government units.

Depending on the type of government, Wisconsin's numbers vary. Wisconsin has more towns (1,259) than all but six states. When cities and villages were added, Wisconsin had 1,851 municipalities, sixth highest among states.

Comparing other government units, the ratio of Wisconsin's school districts (K-12 and technical college combined) was 7.9 for every 100,000 residents, 14th highest and well above the U.S. average of 4.8.

Wisconsin's special districts (756) and counties (72) placed it in the middle of the pack among states (22nd and 24th, respectively, relative to population.)

After World War II, Wisconsin reduced its number of government units from 8,500 in 1942 to 2,449 in 1972, due mainly to school district consolidation. Since then, the number of total government units has increased from 2,449 to 3,120 in 2007. Creation of special districts was the main reason.

For a copy of the WISTAX report "Wisconsin's 3,120 governments" write: WISTAX, 401 North Lawn Ave., Madison, Wisconsin 53704; e-mail, wistax@wistax.org; or call 608.241.9789. Now in its 76th year, the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance is a nonprofit, nonpartisan group dedicated to policy research and citizen education. □

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

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.