



## Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance

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

# NEWS

Contact: Dale J. Knapp or Kyle Christianson  
608.241.9789 or [wistax@wistax.org](mailto:wistax@wistax.org)  
August 25, 2009

### Property Taxes Continue to Rise, But at Slower Pace

In 2009, Taxpayers Paid \$8.73 Billion in Net Property Taxes, Up 3.3% from 2008

MADISON—In 2008-09, Wisconsin local governments levied \$9.67 billion in property taxes, up 4.5% from the prior year. After \$940.6 million in state credits, taxpayers paid \$8.73 billion in net property taxes, a 3.3% increase from 2008. A new study from the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance (WISTAX), “Wisconsin’s ‘Big Two’: Income and Property Taxes,” reports that although gross and net levies were up, the increases were below their averages (5.0% gross, 4.9% net) since 1997. Now in its 78th year, WISTAX is a nonprofit, nonpartisan public-policy research organization dedicated to citizen education.

According to the WISTAX study, school levies rose the most at 5.2%. The increase was partially due to school aids rising less than 2% in 2009. Under school district revenue limits, school levy increases are tied to changes in state aids. With below-average school aid increases, districts fund more of their limits with property taxes. The 5.2% jump was less than school levy increases in the prior two years, but more than the 4.6% average since 1999, WISTAX said.

Technical college levies were up 5.0% in 2009. Since 1999, property taxes for the state’s 16 technical colleges have risen the most, climbing an average of 6.1% per year.

According to the new report, municipal levies rose 4.3% in 2009. Among the three types of municipalities, municipal-purpose levies in villages (6.2%) grew fastest. City levies increased 4.5% from 2008, while levies in towns rose 3.6%. In comparing the state’s largest cities, municipal property taxes grew most in Madison (8.3%), Eau Claire\* (7.1%) and Kenosha (6.2%) [*\*Due to incorrect data from the Department of Revenue, Eau Claire’s increase was originally listed at 10.2%.*]. Fond du Lac (0.8%), Sheboygan (1.2%), and West Allis (1.8%) had levy growth under 2.0%. Of 190 cities statewide, only nine reduced their levies in 2009.

The new WISTAX study also compares property taxes among states. In 2006 (the last year comparative data were available), Wisconsin property taxes claimed 4.41% of personal income. This was above the national average of 3.49% and ranked ninth highest nationally. According to WISTAX researchers, Wisconsin has long had high property taxes, credited to the state’s history of active government and local control. The state also holds historical ties with the “Yankee Northeast,” where property taxes are highest in the nation.

A free copy of *The Wisconsin Taxpayer* titled “Wisconsin’s ‘Big Two’: Income and Property Taxes” is available by contacting WISTAX at 401 North Lawn Ave., Madison, WI 53704-5033; e-mailing [wistax@wistax.org](mailto:wistax@wistax.org); visiting [www.wistax.org](http://www.wistax.org); or phoning 608.241.9789.

*(Editors’ Note: An electronic version of this release is available at [www.wistax.org](http://www.wistax.org))*