

Agenda

WISCONSIN COUNTIES UTILITY TAX ASSOCIATION

Friday, DECEMBER 6, 2019

Wisconsin Counties Association Board Room

22 E Mifflin St #900

Madison WI 53703

Time: 10:30 A.M. – 1:00 P.M. WORKING LUNCH

CALL IN INSTRUCTIONS:

CALL IN NUMBER: (515) 606-5187 Hit #

PARTICIPANT CODE: 935752 Hit #

LEADER CODE: Alice will open the line

Time: 10:30 A.M - 1: 30 P.M.

- **Call to Order/Introductions President Brad Karger**
 - Roll Call/ Welcome Guests
 - **Minutes from October 4, 2019 meeting (handout)**
- **Treasurer's Report- Supervisor Yeomans (handout)**
- **Executive Director Report: Alice O'Connor and Kelly McDowell (handouts)**
- Update WCUTA legislation with Coalition partners for 2019 session
- **Other legislation of interest:**
- **Rep. Samantha Kerkman (AB235/SB251)** creates a levy limit exception for those that receive reduced utility aid payments.
- **Senator Rob Cowles Rep. Sam Kerkman Senate Bill 60/AB 173** requires DOR to post details on its websites of general purpose revenues collected, where the dollars come from and how they are expended. (Handout)
- **AB-344 Property Tax Exemption (Quinn, Romaine)** Telephone Company Tax Exemption for property used to provide broadband service.
- **AB 237 relating to: (Kuglitich and Cowles)** reimbursement grants to employers for payment of costs for certification programs in solar energy and wind energy systems.
- Any Other business
- **Next meeting date**
- **Adjourn**

Please RSVP as soon as possible for lunch order.

WCUTA 2019 Officers

President
BRAD KARGER
(715) 261-1400
Marathon County

Vice President
WILLIAM GOEHRING
(920) 994-4749
Sheboygan County

Secretary
WALT CHRISTENSEN
(920)723-1320
Jefferson County

Treasurer
BOB YEOMANS
(608) 757-5540
Rock County

Executive Director
ALICE O'CONNOR
Direct (608) 225-9391

Member Counties

ASHLAND
BUFFALO
CHIPPEWA
COLUMBIA
DOUGLAS
DUNN
FOREST
GRANT
JACKSON
JEFFERSON
JUNEAU
KENOSHA
KEWAUNEE
LA CROSSE
MANITOWOC
MARATHON
MARINETTE
MARQUETTE
OCONTO
OZAUKEE
ROCK
SAUK
SHEBOYGAN
VERNON
WASHBURN
WASHINGTON
WAUSHARA
WOOD

Directions

Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA) office is located at 22 East Mifflin Street, Suite 900. The building is located on the Capitol Square, two buildings south from the intersection of Mifflin Street, Pickney Street and Webster Street. Our parking ramp is located on the side of the building but a one-way street toward the capitol square means you must enter it from the outside loop on the square or go around the block from the square.

Bring your parking sticker to be validated. You will need your ticket to get out of the ramp. Park in the visitor slots. The ramp has no elevator to the building.

To enter the ramp: Dayton/Pinckney Parking Ramp, 21 E. Dayton Street From Milwaukee

*I-94 W toward Madison: Take WI-30 W toward Madison
Exit for US-151 S/US-151 N/E Washington Avenue Follow US-151 S/E. Washington
Avenue . Turn Right onto N. Webster Street; Turn Left onto E. Dayton Street; Parking
Ramp is on the Left.*

From Janesville/Beloit

*I-90 W/I-39 N toward Madison :Take Exit 142A on the left for US-12 W/Us-18
W/W Beltline Hwy Take Exit 263 for John Nolen Drive ;Follow signs for US-151/S
Blair Street Turn left onto E. Washington Avenue/US-151
Turn Right onto N. Webster Street; Turn Left onto E. Dayton Street;
Parking Ramp is on the Left.*

WISCONSIN COUNTIES UTILITY TAX ASSOCIATION

PO Box 5126, Madison, Wisconsin 53705

Phone: (608) 225- 9391

2018-2019 Officers

President
BRAD KARGER
(715) 261-1400
Marathon County

November 6, 2019

Vice President
WILLIAM GOEHRING
(920) 994-4749
Sheboygan County

TO: Assembly Committee on Government Accountability and Oversight

From: Alice O'Connor, Executive Director Wisconsin Counties Utility Tax Association

Secretary
Walt Christiansen

Re: Support for AB 173, disclosure of information regarding state revenue

Treasurer
BOB YEOMANS
(608) 757-5540
Rock County

The Wisconsin Counties Utility Tax Association (WCUTA) is comprised of 28 counties and guest counties who have a particular interest in the utility tax formula and how the state calculates utility aid payments. These payments are based off of revenue paid by utilities to the state, in lieu of local taxation where their facilities reside. For years, we have tried to access this data and have been unsuccessful. The Department of Revenue has never adequately explained to my board of local elected officials, why the state keeps approximately 70 percent of qualifying utility tax collections for general purpose revenue (GPR) and DOR's own program revenue. Why don't they return a larger share to communities who receive this payment in lieu of local property taxes which they would otherwise collect on those utilities. The Department of Revenue, regardless of which administration is in power, has never been willing to explain why the state keeps approximately \$174 million or more, each year, or where the money goes, or why more of it has not been returned to local communities. We wonder, why has the state kept so much, other than because they could. In this same calculation, the Dept. of Revenue 2017-2018 collections for example, were \$247.5 million. We ask year after year, why has the state collected all this money from qualifying utility properties (municipal electric companies, electric cooperatives, municipal light, heat and power companies and private light, heat and power companies), and only returned about \$74 million to local governments. We never get an answer. We believe all taxes collected need to be accountable for their intended purpose. We have never understood the wall we continue to face when we have repeatedly asked why local taxpayers in counties and municipalities who rely on the utility tax payment *in lieu of general property taxation of those utilities*, are only receiving a small fraction of utility tax collections.

Executive Director
ALICE O'CONNOR
(608) 225-9391
aoc@constituencyservices.org

We are but one example of how greater transparency envisioned under AB 173 would make our government more transparent. This is why we support the efforts of Rep. Kerkman and Senator Cowles to make the Department of Revenue more accountable to its citizens so everyone understands what money is collected and where it goes. There should be reasons and explanations for the sizable dollars that are collected year after year, and specifically when the taxes collected are not used for their intended purpose. A payment in lieu of taxes should be defensibly fair. We have no way to judge what a fair payment would look like. Without access to data, we have no way to analyze and gauge what options we might wish to present to the legislature to change current law as it relates to the current methodology of disbursing utility aid payments.

Member Counties

ASHLAND
BUFFALO
CHIPPEWA
COLUMBIA
DOUGLAS
DUNN
FOREST
GRANT
JACKSON
JEFFERSON
JUNEAU
KENOSHA
KEWAUNEE
LA CROSSE
MANITOWOC
MARATHON
MARINETTE
MARQUETTE
OCONTO
OZAUKEE
ROCK
SAUK
SHEBOYGAN
VERNON
WASHBURN
WASHINGTON
WAUSHARA
WOOD

We believe AB 173 provides great oversight and accountability of tax dollars that are both collected and spent. Our frustration by this lack of transparency has gone on for years. We hope this committee will give serious consideration to move this legislation forward. Taxpayers deserve to know how every penny of taxes collected are spent and should be available for scrutiny so informed decisions can be made in a responsible manner. Thank you for your consideration.

