

JULY 30, 2014

On July 30, 2014, a symposium on the personal property tax in Wisconsin was held in Room 412 East, State Capitol. Attendees heard from eight speakers who shared various perspectives on this topic and answered questions posed by the Steering Committee for the symposia series. The following people spoke to the committee:

Todd Berry, President, Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance.

Nate Ristow, John Koskinen, and Scott Shields, Wisconsin Department of Revenue (DOR).

Rick Olin, Legislative Fiscal Bureau.

Robert Lorier, Assessor, City of Brookfield.

Michael Prochnow, Assessor, City of Fitchburg.

Bob Lange, Schenck, S.C.

Mr. Berry began the symposium with an overview of the tax system, the state economy, job trends, population trends, and other information that policy makers may find useful. He also provided specific information about the state's property tax system, and the personal property tax in particular, including history and trends, how revenues from this source are used, who pays the bills, and how this type of tax stacks up against others with respect to efficiency, stability, compliance, and other factors.

The speakers from DOR and the Fiscal Bureau provided specific information about personal property tax laws in Wisconsin, including information about exemptions, assessment of manufacturing facilities, reporting processes, challenges inherent in the personal property tax system, and potential problems that could arise if changes are made to this tax.

Mr. Lorier, Mr. Prochnow, and Mr. Lange provided perspective about this tax from the ground level, as seen by the people responsible for administering this tax for local governments and businesses complying with the tax. They pointed out a number of problematic characteristics of this tax, but also identified the importance of this revenue source for local governments.

After hearing from these speakers, the Steering Committee discussed the second personal property tax symposium scheduled for September 3rd, 2014. At that symposium, the committee plans to hear from people with various perspectives on tax policy and from a panel of representatives of various groups, including groups representing local governments and businesses, to gauge their reactions to the information provided in the first and second symposia.