

Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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Senator Howard Marklein, Senate Chair
Representative Mark Born, Assembly Chair
Joint Committee on Finance
State Capitol
Madison, WI 53702

Dear Senator Marklein and Representative Born:

In January of each year, this office conducts a review of the status of the state's general fund and presents its findings to the Legislature. In the even-numbered years, this analysis includes an examination of economic forecasts and tax collection and expenditure data of the current fiscal year, and projections for each year of the current biennium. We have now completed that review.

Based upon our analysis, we project the closing, net general fund balance at the end of this biennium (June 30, 2027) to be \$2,373.5 million. This is \$1,529.0 million above the net balance that was projected at the time of enactment of the 2025-27 biennial budget, as modified to: (1) incorporate the 2024-25 ending balance (2025-26 opening balance) as shown in the Annual Fiscal Report; (2) include the fiscal effect of all legislation enacted to date in the current legislative session (2025 Acts 1 to 82); and (3) include the estimated fiscal effects of the following general fund tax law changes that were automatically adopted by, or altered estimated tax collections for, the state after enactment of the federal P.L. 119-21, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA): (a) the credit percentage for the child and dependent care expense credit; (b) Section 179 expensing provisions; (c) the federal limit for itemized deductions of state and local taxes; (d) reporting requirements for de minimus payments by third-party settlement organizations; (e) health savings accounts; (f) the qualified small business stock exclusion; (g) eligible expenses made from college savings accounts; (h) eligible rollovers to ABLE accounts from college savings accounts; and (i) the repeal of the deduction for energy efficient buildings.

The \$1,529.0 million is the net result of: (1) an increase of \$1,367.1 million in estimated tax collections; (2) an increase of \$104.0 million in departmental revenues (non-tax receipts deposited in the general fund); (3) an increase of \$49.9 million in sum sufficient appropriations; and (4) an increase of \$107.8 million in the amounts that are estimated to lapse (revert) to the general fund.

The following table reflects the 2025-27 general fund condition statement, which incorporates our revenue and expenditure projections.

TABLE 1

2025-27 General Fund Condition Statement

	<u>2025-26</u>	<u>2026-27</u>
Revenues		
Opening Balance, July 1	\$4,605,574,000	\$3,003,603,500
Taxes	22,685,700,000	23,242,500,000
Departmental Revenues		
Tribal Gaming	12,176,500	13,992,700
Other	<u>708,250,200</u>	<u>570,562,400</u>
Total	\$28,011,700,700	\$26,830,658,600
Appropriations, Transfers, and Reserves		
Gross Appropriations	\$22,734,799,500	\$23,006,347,100
Transfers to:		
Building Program	326,500,000	0
Local Government Fund	1,587,022,700	1,622,776,600
Transportation Fund:		
EV Sales Tax	28,038,500	28,470,600
0.25% Transfer	54,901,100	56,517,700
Other	580,000,000	0
Mental Health Institutes	15,800,000	0
Veterans Homes	5,100,000	0
Compensation Reserves	159,891,200	225,809,500
Less Lapses	<u>-483,955,800</u>	<u>-597,745,300</u>
Net Appropriations	\$25,008,097,200	\$24,342,176,200
Balances		
Gross Balance	\$3,003,603,500	\$2,488,482,400
Less Required Statutory	<u>-110,000,000</u>	<u>-115,000,000</u>
Net Balance	\$2,893,603,500	\$2,373,482,400

Medical Assistance

According to the December, 2025, quarterly report prepared by the Department of Health Services, the biennial GPR appropriation for the Medical Assistance (MA) program is currently projected to end the 2025-27 biennium with a deficit of \$213.2 million. Some utilization and enrollment factors are slightly below budget estimates, and some are slightly above, but on balance the Department anticipates a deficit. This amount is relatively small in relation to the total GPR budget for the program (approximately 2.2%), and could change over the next 18 months as actual enrollment and program costs vary from current estimates.

Additionally, preliminary federal guidance from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) has created some uncertainty about the allowability of changes to Wisconsin's hospital assessment and access payments as authorized under 2025 Act 15. Specifically, Act 15 increased the amount to be collected as part of the hospital assessment and subsequently used to: (a) increase payments to hospitals; and (b) offset GPR funding for the Medical Assistance program in the 2025-27 biennium. In the event that this increase is disallowed by CMS, the result would be both a reduction of MA trust fund revenues available to offset GPR costs for the program as a whole, and an increase in GPR expenditures for hospital payments, for a total GPR shortfall of \$396 million annually (\$792 million in the 2025-27 biennium). CMS indicated that this matter will be addressed through formal rule making procedures, and thus will be subject to provisions of notice and public comment. Pending additional information from the federal government, the allowability of the Act 15 changes is not currently known.

Because of the uncertainty of the fiscal impact of the MA items mentioned above, neither is reflected in the general fund condition statement shown in Table 1.

Review of the National Economy in 2025

This office prepared revenue estimates for the 2025-27 biennium in January, 2025, based on the January, 2025, S&P Global Market Intelligence (S&P Global) forecast for the U.S. economy. S&P Global anticipated that the U.S. would experience below-potential real gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 2.0%. The forecast predicted that the odds of an economic slowdown without causing a recession remained favorable, despite policies under the Trump Administration that were generally expected to increase inflation, slow the pace of monetary policy easing, and contribute to a stronger dollar and tighter financial conditions.

The January, 2025, S&P Global forecast was based on the following assumptions. First, it expected that Treasury would undertake "extraordinary measures" to meet its debt obligations, and the debt ceiling would be increased without a government shutdown. It also assumed that: (a) the individual income tax provisions in the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) would be extended; (b) some tip and overtime pay would be excluded from federal income taxation; (c) the corporate tax rate would be reduced from 21% to 15% on domestic production; and (d) Medicare and Social Security benefits would continue to be paid. Second, it was assumed that, although state and local budgets had returned to deficit, unspent pandemic-era stimulus funds and ongoing Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act funds would mitigate pressures to reduce state and local spending. Third, the forecast predicted that net international migration would be reduced by 500,000 per year through 2028, relative to current Census projections. Fourth, S&P Global anticipated that the Federal Reserve would reduce the federal funds rate by 25 basis points in March and June of 2025, before pausing until the third quarter of 2026. Fifth, the forecast assumed a universal tariff rate of 10%, with a 30% tariff on imports from China. Finally, growth in real, trade-weighted foreign GDP was expected to remain unchanged at 2.0% in 2025, while the foreign consumer price index (CPI) was expected to slow to 2.5% in 2025.

S&P Global's January, 2025, forecast also included an optimistic and pessimistic scenario. The optimistic forecast scenario was that lower tariffs and fewer and slower deportations would lead to less retaliation by trading partners and faster population growth. As a result, compared to the

baseline forecast, the optimistic scenario predicted lower CPI, elevated business fixed investment, higher real personal consumption expenditures (PCE), and higher growth in real GDP. The downside risk to the forecast was that higher tariffs and stricter immigration policy would have a more negative impact on economic output, financial conditions, and business fixed investment, with these factors contributing to higher inflation, an elevated unemployment rate, slower real GDP growth, and a delayed easing of monetary policy.

In May, this office reviewed additional tax collection data and S&P Global's May, 2025, economic forecast. The estimates were revised upward slightly in 2024-25, due to strength in year-to-date collections, but downward in the 2025-27 biennium. The May revisions also incorporated S&P Global's May forecast for the U.S. economy, which generally reflected expectations of weaker economic growth in 2025, relative to the January, 2025, forecast. The forecast for real GDP growth was decreased accordingly, from 2.0% to 1.3% in 2025. Housing starts in 2025 were revised up, from -3.0% to 1.3% growth over 2024, while light vehicle sales growth was revised down, from 2.4% to -2.0%. Forecasted 2025 growth was also revised in May to reflect changes to the following indicators: (a) consumer prices, which were up 0.5 percentage points; (b) personal income (down 0.5 percentage points); (c) economic profits (down 5.1 percentage points); and (d) nominal consumer spending (up 0.5 percentage points).

Several key assumptions in the May forecast differed from those of the January forecast. S&P Global's May forecast included a new assumption of 255,000 federal layoffs through October, 2025. It was assumed that federal funds rate cuts would be delayed, relative to January assumptions, until December, 2025, at which point it was anticipated that the Federal Reserve would reduce the federal funds rate by 25 basis points at three consecutive meetings through March, 2026, then would continue reducing the rate at every other meeting through 2026. The May forecast included new Section 232 tariffs (tariffs on products deemed a threat to national security) on copper, lumber, semiconductors, pharmaceuticals, and critical minerals, ranging from 10% to 25%, effective in the fourth quarter of 2025. In addition, the forecast included International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) tariffs tied to fentanyl flows and immigration on imports from China (20%), Canada (25%), and Mexico (25%); the latter two were expected to decrease to 12% by early 2026. The universal tariff on imports from China, which was at 125% at the time of the May forecast (much higher than the 30% rate assumed in January), was expected to decrease to 17% by late 2025.

S&P Global now estimates that nominal GDP grew 5.1% in 2025, 0.1 percentage point higher than the May, 2025, forecast of 5.0%. S&P Global estimated that real GDP grew by 2.2% in 2025, exceeding its May expectation by 0.9 percentage points due to lower inflation than anticipated in May and by 0.2 percentage points compared to the January, 2025, projections.

Changing tariff policies created uncertainty throughout 2025. On February 1, 2025, President Trump issued a number of executive orders to impose new IEEPA tariffs on imports from Canada (25% generally and 10% on energy products), Mexico (25%), and China (10%), effective February 4, 2025. On February 3, a 30-day pause on tariff increases for imports from Canada and Mexico was announced, causing such tariffs to take effect on March 4. In early March, the President amended his previous executive orders to: (a) increase the tariff on China to 20% (effective retroactively to February 4); (b) exempt from tariffs any United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA)-qualifying goods from Canada and Mexico; and (c) lower tariffs from 25% to 10% for any non-

qualifying potash from Canada or Mexico. A 10% baseline tariff took effect for most countries on April 5, 2025, with various country-specific tariffs that were set to take effect on April 9, including a 34% tariff (increased to 84% on April 8 and 125% on April 9) on China. All country-specific tariffs except those on China were paused for 90 days (until July 9), then later extended until August 1 and again to August 7, after an adjustment was made to the rates for each country. In May, the 125% tariff on goods from China was lowered to 10% for 90 days, until August 12, 2025 (and later extended to November), at which point the tariff increased to 34%. A July 30, 2025, executive order imposed a 40% IEEPA tariff on Brazil, in addition to the 10% reciprocal tariff previously announced. The 25% IEEPA tariff on goods from Canada was increased to 35% in August, and a new IEEPA tariff of 25% was imposed on imports from India.

Various expansions, additions, and increases to Section 232 tariffs were also made in 2025. In mid-February, a proclamation extended the existing 25% tariff on steel to all countries (certain countries were previously exempt) and increased the 10% tariff on aluminum to 25%, effective March 12, 2025. A March 26 proclamation imposed a 25% tariff on automobiles and certain auto parts, set to take effect on April 3 and May 3, respectively, with exemptions for USMCA-compliant parts. In early June, the tariffs on steel and aluminum were increased from 25% to 50%, except for the United Kingdom, which remained at 25%. Later that month, the 50% tariff was extended to steel derivative products. A new 50% tariff on semi-finished copper and intensive copper derivatives took effect on August 1. Various Section 232 tariffs on imports of timber and lumber products took effect in October, 2025, and a 25% tariff (later decreased to 15%) on imports from all countries of medium- and heavy-duty vehicles and parts, as well as a 10% tariff on buses, took effect in November. With all of the tariffs imposed throughout the year, S&P Global now estimates an effective tariff rate of 11.84% in the fourth quarter of 2025, much lower than projected in May (20.54%). For the year, S&P estimates a four-quarter average tariff rate of 8.59% (compared to 16.87% in the May forecast).

S&P Global's May assumption regarding net international migration, which remains unchanged, was that net international migration would be reduced by 0.5 million per year, relative to the current Census projections, for the four years of the current administration due to increased enforcement of immigration laws. On December 10, 2025, the Department of Homeland Security reported that more than 605,000 individuals had been deported since January 20, 2025. An additional 1.9 million individuals voluntarily self-deported in 2025, resulting in a total of 2.5 million individuals leaving the country. In November, 2025, the Federal Reserve estimated that net international migration into the country would be around 0.5 million people in 2025, down from 2.2 million in 2024.

The Federal Reserve held the target for the federal funds rate at a range of 4.25% to 4.50% until September, 2025, at which point the rate was reduced by 25 basis points. The rate was lowered two more times in 2025, in October and December, ending the year at a range of 3.50% to 3.75%. These reductions were delayed compared to January, 2025, expectations, but accelerated compared to the May, 2025, forecast. In addition, the Federal Reserve made the decision in October to cease its reduction of its holdings of Treasury securities and agency debt on December 1, 2025. At its December meeting, the Federal Open Market Committee determined that reserve balances had fallen to sufficient levels and stated that it would, on an ongoing basis, initiate purchases of shorter-term Treasury securities as needed to maintain a similar level of reserves.

The monthly average 30-year, conventional, fixed mortgage rate slowly eased as the year progressed, declining from 6.96% in January, 2025, to 6.19% by December, 2025. While mortgage rates ended the year at a lower level than projected in May, the average rate for the year (6.59%) was consistent with the May forecast. S&P Global estimates that the average price of existing homes increased 1.6% in 2025, while the price of a 1996-style home increased 3.1%. Existing house sales remained unchanged, while sales of new homes declined 0.4%, compared to 2024. Single-family housing starts declined 7.4% in 2025, a result S&P Global attributes to reduced immigration and higher tariffs. According to S&P Global, in November, 2025, the real mortgage payment on a median-priced home was 66% higher than in January, 2020.

The stock market remained surprisingly strong in 2025, with growth in artificial intelligence a major driver. The S&P 500 and Dow Jones Industrial Average increased 16.4% and 13.0%, respectively, over the year, building on the significant market strength seen in 2023 and 2024. Household equities increased 13.9% in 2025, exceeding January (1.3%) and May (-6.1%) expectations.

The growth in artificial intelligence applications, which are energy-intensive, has prompted significant investment in data centers. S&P Global reports that, in the first 11 months of 2025, U.S. investment in data centers totaled more than \$61 billion, following just under \$61 billion of investment in 2024. A Harvard economist found that, in the first half of 2025, 92% of GDP growth was due to investment in information processing equipment & software. If such investments were excluded from the calculation, first half GDP would have grown at just a 0.1% annual rate. S&P Global now estimates that investment in information processing equipment increased 22.6% in 2025, after increasing 7.3% in 2024.

Inflation continued to ease in 2025, although it remained above the Federal Reserve's long-range target of 2% (as it has since 2021). CPI declined slightly from 3.0% growth in 2024 to 2.7% growth in 2025 (0.6 percentage points lower than previously forecasted). Food prices increased at a similar rate to overall CPI (2.9%), while commodity and energy prices grew only 0.7% and 0.1%, respectively. Core CPI (which excludes food and energy prices) increased 2.9%, driven by a 3.6% increase in prices for nonenergy services. The average price of a new vehicle increased slightly, from \$46,100 in 2024 to \$46,600 in 2025.

The labor market continued to soften in 2025, with the national unemployment rate slowly rising as the year progressed, increasing from 4.0% in January, 2025, to 4.4% in December, 2025. The national unemployment rate averaged 4.3% in 2025, 0.1 percentage point lower than anticipated in May. The Wisconsin unemployment rate remained unchanged from December, 2024, at 3.1% as of November, 2025.

According to S&P Global, the U.S. economy has entered into a "low-hire, low-fire" environment. As such, the percentage of unemployed persons who have been unemployed for 27 weeks or longer rose from 21.1% in January, 2025, to 26.0% in December, 2025. For the 12-month period from December, 2024, to November, 2025, total layoffs increased 2.8% over the prior 12-month period. While layoffs did increase, there were no major spikes in layoffs throughout the year. U.S. personal income increased 4.8% and wage and salary disbursements increased 4.4% in 2025, exceeding May, 2025, estimates by 0.2 and 0.3 percentage points, respectively.

In early 2025, the Trump Administration provided federal employees with the option to resign with pay until September 30, 2025, through a deferred resignation program. Employees who chose this option effectively quit their jobs in February, 2025, and stopped working, but still received pay and remained on federal payrolls until October. In addition to the deferred resignation program, the federal government conducted layoffs throughout the year. Over the year, these measures reduced overall federal employment by an estimated 317,000 employees (offset by approximately 68,000 newly-hired federal employees), representing a net decrease in federal employment of 8.3% over December, 2024, levels. However, major federal job losses were offset by net job gains over the last 12 months (December 2024 to December 2025) of 885,800 in the private sector (with 709,000 of the increase due to gains in private education and health services jobs). From December, 2024, to December, 2025, total nonfarm payrolls increased by 584,000, while federal employment declined by 274,000. Overall, the four-quarter average of U.S. nonfarm payrolls is estimated to have increased 1.8% from 2024 to 2025, just 0.1 percentage point less than previously anticipated, while Wisconsin nonfarm payrolls decreased 0.1% between December, 2024, and November, 2025.

Many factors, including rising unemployment rates and concerns about job security, persistent inflation and price levels, high interest rates, and concerns over tariffs and the potential impact on prices have weighed on consumer sentiment. The University of Michigan's consumer sentiment index fell from 74.0 in December, 2024, to 51.0 in November, 2025, its lowest level since June of 2022. Consumer sentiment increased slightly to 52.9 in December, 2025.

Despite low consumer sentiment levels, nominal consumer spending grew 5.3% in 2025 (2.6 percentage points higher than CPI growth) Consumer spending was the primary driver of the economy, contributing 1.80 percentage points to real GDP growth. However, data suggest that spending strength, despite broader economic concerns, has primarily increased among the wealthiest households, while lower-income consumers have begun to decrease spending.

On July 4, 2025, President Trump signed the OBBBA into law. The bill extends and/or makes permanent many of the TCJA individual and business tax provisions, including the rates and brackets of the 2017 individual tax cuts, consistent with previous forecast assumptions. The bill also provides tax exclusions for overtime pay and tips, and temporarily increases the deduction limit for state and local taxes from \$10,000 to \$40,000 for five years. The limit will revert to \$10,000 beginning in tax year 2030. S&P Global had anticipated that the bill would include tax relief on tip income and overtime pay, although the actual relief provided was smaller than previously assumed. Corporate marginal tax rate reductions previously assumed by S&P Global did not occur. The OBBBA makes several changes to Medicaid eligibility, enrollment, and payment policies, with varying effective dates, and applicable to different populations. On net, the bill increases direct federal spending, rather than reducing it (as previously assumed by S&P Global).

On October 1, 2025, the federal government entered a government shutdown after the U.S. Congress failed to pass a budget for the 2026 fiscal year (October 1, 2025, to September 30, 2026). This marked the first shutdown since the 2018-19 federal fiscal year. On November 12, President Trump signed legislation ending the shutdown after 43 days and funding the federal government until January 30, 2026. Certain agencies and programs, including the Department of Agriculture, Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, the Food and Drug Administration, and the legislative branch, were funded through September of 2026. S&P Global estimates that the direct impact of the

shutdown was a 0.8 percentage point decline in GDP growth in the fourth quarter, although it forecasts that this decline will be offset by a corresponding increase in the first quarter of 2026.

National Economic Forecast

Under the January, 2026, forecast, S&P Global predicts moderate real GDP growth of 2.3% in 2026 and 1.9% in 2027. Despite recent increases in unemployment rate levels, S&P Global's forecast does not project a recession. However, the forecast projects that inflation will persist long enough to keep Federal Reserve actions paused through June, 2026. The Attachment outlines the January, 2026, economic forecast by S&P Global, as well as changes to the forecast since May, 2025, for 2025 through 2027.

The 2026 forecast is based on the following key assumptions. First, the forecast incorporates the direct effects of the partial government shutdown that ended on November 12, 2025, as well as the provisions of the OBBBA. Second, states generally remain fiscally sound despite most of the pandemic-era funds having been spent, although the forecast assumes that states will take on a larger share of the provision of Medicaid benefits in response to reduced federal grants. Third, the forecast assumes a reduction in net international migration by 500,000 per year for the four years of the current administration, relative to current Census estimates. Fourth, S&P Global anticipates that the Federal Reserve will pause its reduction of the federal funds rate until June of 2026, then reduce the rate twice to reach S&P Global's estimate of the long-run "neutral" range of 3.00% to 3.25% in September, 2026. Fifth, the forecast assumes a new Section 232 tariff of 10% on critical minerals will take effect in the first quarter of 2027, and that previously announced tariffs on furniture and cabinetry and semiconductors will no longer take effect. Current IEEPA tariffs tied to fentanyl flows and immigration on imports from China (10%), Canada (35%) and Mexico (25%), as well as reciprocal tariffs announced in August of 2025, remain in place, although the forecast expects that the rates on Canada and Mexico will decrease to 15% by mid-2026. Finally, it assumes that growth in real, trade-weighted foreign GDP will slow to 2.0% and growth in foreign CPI inflation will fall to 2.2% in 2026. S&P Global assumes that foreign sovereign bond yields average 3.0% from 2025 through 2027.

Consumer Prices. CPI slowed to 2.7% in 2025, down from 3.0% in 2024. Core CPI, which excludes food and energy prices, exceeded overall CPI, growing 2.9% in 2025 (1.0 percentage point lower than predicted in May). S&P Global expects growth in CPI to slow to 2.5% in 2026, before increasing to 2.8% in 2027, due, in part, to a slowdown and subsequent recovery of energy prices in 2026 (0.1%) and 2027 (4.5%), respectively. S&P Global also notes that the price impacts of tariffs have been slow to materialize, contributing to the forecast of lower inflation in 2026 and higher inflation in 2027. Core CPI growth is estimated at 2.7% in 2026 and 2027.

The price of Brent crude oil is expected to ease from \$69 in 2025 to \$59 in 2026 and \$64 in 2027. Shortly after S&P Global released its January, 2026, forecast, the U.S. carried out a military operation in Venezuela and removed President Nicolás Maduro. In addition, a partial blockade of Venezuelan oil exports has been in place since December 11, 2025. Even if this blockade were lifted, S&P Global projects that the increase in crude-oil supply would not significantly impact overall oil prices.

Personal Consumption. Nominal PCE grew 5.3% in 2025, which is 0.4 percentage points less than previously forecast, with growth in spending on services (6.0%) outpacing spending on goods (3.9%). As a result, the shift by consumers from spending on goods to services continued, with purchases of services making up 68.9% of all PCE, 0.3 percentage points higher than estimated in May, in 2025 (compared to 68.5% in 2024). The forecast projects that consumer spending will continue to shift towards services, with purchases of services making up 69.7% of all PCE, 0.4 percentage points higher than estimated in May, by 2027. Real (inflation-adjusted) PCE is expected to slow from 2.7% in 2025 to 2.6% in 2026 and 1.9% in 2027.

S&P Global anticipates that nominal PCE growth will remain at 5.3% in 2026 and slow to 4.5% in 2027, as the softening of the labor market prompts more caution from consumers. Sales of consumer items generally subject to the state sales tax (such as most durable goods, clothing, restaurant meals, accommodations, and certain services) grew by an estimated 5.6% in 2025, and are forecast to grow by 2.6% in 2026 and 3.2% in 2027 (after accounting for the new exemption of residential energy from sales tax).

Employment. The national unemployment rate averaged 4.3% over 2025, lower than previous projections (in January and May, 2025) by 0.1 percentage point. S&P Global projects that the unemployment rate will rise to 4.7% in 2026, then ease slightly to 4.6% in 2027. Average annual nonfarm payrolls grew 0.9% in 2025 (0.1 percentage point lower than previously forecast), and are expected to remain relatively flat through the forecast period, growing just 0.5% in both 2026 and 2027. S&P Global estimates that the U.S. labor force participation rate declined slightly to 62.4% in 2025, and expects that the rate will be unchanged in 2026, before declining to 62.2% in 2027.

Personal Income. Personal income grew 4.8% in 2025, faster than expected in the May forecast (4.6%), but less than projected in January (5.1%). Wage and salary disbursements grew 4.4% in 2025 (compared to 4.1% forecast in May, 2025), and are projected to continue increasing 4.8% in 2026 and 5.8% in 2027. Personal income is expected to grow slightly faster, increasing 5.3% in 2026 and 5.9% in 2027.

Real disposable income grew at a slower pace compared to 2024 (2.9%), up 1.7% in 2025. S&P Global anticipates that growth in real disposable income will increase to 3.3% in 2026 and 3.1% in 2027. The personal savings rate, as a percentage of disposable income, declined from 5.5% in 2024 to 4.6% in 2025, but is expected to increase to 5.2% in 2026 and 6.3% in 2027. Real household net worth increased 3.5% in 2025 and is expected to increase 1.0% in 2026, before declining 2.4% in 2027, driven by a projected decrease in equities (-7.3%).

Monetary Policy. As mentioned, the Federal Reserve decreased the federal funds rate three times in 2025, to a range of 3.50% to 3.75%. In addition, the Federal Reserve reduced its holdings of agency debt, mortgage-backed securities, and Treasuries by \$321.4 billion in 2025, to approximately \$6.6 trillion, but decided to cease further reductions beginning on December 1, 2025.

Going forward, it is anticipated that the Federal Reserve will pause its easing cycle until June of 2026, at which point it will reduce the federal funds rate twice, to S&P Global's estimated

long-run "neutral" range of 3.00% to 3.25% in September, 2026. In 2025, the average 30-year fixed mortgage rate was 6.59%, down 0.14 percentage points from 2024. In response to further Federal Reserve rate reductions, mortgage rates are expected to decline to 6.01% in 2026 and 5.83% in 2027.

Housing. Housing starts declined 1.9% in 2025, in contrast to projections of 1.3% growth in May, 2025, driven by a 7.4% decline in single-family housing starts. Multi-family housing starts grew 13.8% in 2025. Growth in house prices slowed in 2025, with the average price of existing houses increasing 1.6% and the average price for new houses increasing just 0.6%. Sales of existing houses declined less than 0.1 percentage point in 2025, reaching its lowest point since the start of the data series in 1999, while sales of new houses declined 0.4%.

Going forward, S&P Global estimates a continued decline in housing starts in 2026 (-2.6%) and a slight increase in 2027 (0.3%). Sales of new and existing homes are expected to increase 9.0% in 2026 and 6.7% in 2027, as lower mortgage rates and easing prices make housing more affordable. The average price of existing homes is expected to grow 3.1% in 2026 and 3.4% in 2027, while the average price of new homes is projected to increase just 0.6% in 2026 and 2.7% in 2027.

Business Investment. S&P Global estimates that nominal nonresidential fixed investment grew 5.2% in 2025, 0.4 percentage points lower than the May estimate of 5.6%. Growth in 2025 was led by investment in equipment (9.9%), particularly information processing equipment (22.6%), and intellectual property products (6.6%). Inventories increased by an estimated \$35.1 billion in 2025 (from quarter four of 2024 to quarter four of 2025), down from the \$65.9 billion increase estimated in May, 2025. Going forward, S&P Global anticipates inventories will continue to increase another \$17.9 billion in 2026 and \$79.7 billion in 2027.

Growth in nominal nonresidential fixed investment is projected to slow to 3.0% in 2026 and 2.6% in 2027, reflecting a continued decline in spending on manufacturing structures (-9.3% in 2026 and -21.2% in 2027) and a slowing of growth in intellectual property products (5.0% in 2026 and 2.7% in 2027).

International Trade. In contrast with May predictions, growth in nominal exports (3.4%) slightly exceeded growth in imports (3.0%) in 2025. Imports grew 2.4 percentage points slower than previously anticipated, while exports grew 1.4 percentage points faster. However, in real dollar terms, growth in imports (2.7%) still exceeded growth in exports (1.8%). Therefore, net exports subtracted 0.18 percentage points from real GDP growth in 2025. As a result of increased tariffs in 2025, taxes on production and imports increased 98%, from \$185.1 billion in 2024 to \$365.6 billion in 2025. The forecast anticipates that federal tariff revenues will increase federal tax revenues further in 2026 and 2027, to \$568.9 billion and \$566.0 billion, respectively.

Over the remainder of the forecast period, S&P Global predicts that some domestic demand will be redirected to domestic producers due to the higher cost of imports. Therefore, growth in nominal exports (4.1% in 2026 and 5.9% in 2027) is expected to exceed growth in nominal imports (-0.8% in 2026 and 3.8% in 2027), improving the balance of trade by 18.5% in 2026 and 5.9% in 2027. Net exports are expected to contribute 0.29 percentage points to real GDP growth in 2026

and subtract 0.02 in 2027.

Corporate Profits. Corporate before-tax book profits remained unchanged in 2025 (compared to 2024), and are forecast to increase 3.8% in 2026 and 0.3% in 2027. Economic profits, which are adjusted for inventory valuation and capital consumption at current cost (and are not affected by federal tax laws), grew 6.5% in 2025 (12.3 percentage points more than predicted in May). S&P Global forecasts that economic profits will increase 4.1% in 2026 and remain stable in 2027. The current forecast assumes that the effective federal corporate tax rate for all industries was 14.2% in 2025, and will increase to 14.3% in 2026 and 14.5% in 2027.

Fiscal Policy. The annual federal budget deficit is estimated to have declined from \$1,816.8 billion in 2024 to \$1,775.4 billion in 2025. Going forward, the forecast expects the annual deficit to increase to \$1,802.1 billion in 2026 and \$1,853.3 billion in 2027. As a result, the federal deficit is expected to increase from \$36.9 trillion (equal to 120% of U.S. GDP) in 2025 to \$41.6 trillion (123% of GDP) in 2027. S&P Global estimates that spending by the federal government subtracted 0.04 percentage points from real GDP growth in 2025, but will contribute 0.16 percentage points in 2026 and 0.02 percentage points in 2027. State and local government spending contributed 0.27 percentage points to GDP growth in 2025, and is projected to contribute another 0.1 percentage point in 2026 and 0.03 percentage points in 2027.

Alternate Scenarios. S&P Global's January, 2026, forecast also includes an optimistic scenario and a pessimistic scenario. Under the optimistic scenario, S&P Global assigns a 30% probability that the U.S. will implement lower tariffs and experience less retaliation by trading partners than assumed in the baseline forecast. In response, the Federal Reserve continues the current easing cycle at a faster pace than in the baseline, reducing the federal funds rate three times in 2026, versus two reductions in the baseline, and bringing the funds rate target range to 2.75 to 3.00% in June of 2026, 25 basis points below the baseline range. The unemployment rate briefly peaks at 4.7%, as in the baseline forecast, but remains 0.2 percentage points below the base, on average. Under the optimistic scenario, fewer and slower deportations boost population growth compared to the baseline, increasing real PCE by 0.7 and 0.5 percentage points in 2026 and 2027, respectively. The combination of lower tariffs and faster population growth increases economic output and financial conditions, which contributes to elevated business fixed investment. The optimistic scenario assumes that lower tariffs will lead to faster moderation in inflation in 2026, with CPI at 2.4% in 2026 (0.1 percentage point lower than the baseline). However, economic strength and labor market tightness bring CPI 0.3 percentage points higher than the baseline in 2027, with growth of 3.1%. Real GDP grows 2.9% in 2026 and 2.2% in 2027 (0.7 and 0.3 percentage points higher than the baseline, respectively).

Under the pessimistic scenario, to which S&P assigns a 20% probability, higher tariffs and a more noticeable retaliation by trading partners cause higher near-term inflation (2.7%) than assumed in the baseline. Higher tariffs, paired with slower population growth as a result of stricter immigration policy, have a more negative impact on economic output, financial conditions, and business fixed investment, compared to the baseline forecast. These factors push the economy into a two-quarter recession starting in early 2026. As such, real GDP grows 1.4 and 1.5 percentage points slower than the baseline in 2026 and 2027, respectively. Under the pessimistic scenario, the unemployment rate rises to 6.7% by mid-2028, exceeding the peak in the baseline forecast by 2.0

percentage points. The elevated unemployment rate causes inflation to fall below the baseline forecast in mid-2027. In response to economic weakness, this scenario predicts that the Federal Reserve aggressively cuts the federal funds rate in 2026, bringing the rate to a range of 2.00% to 2.25% by September, 2026. Normalization of the rates towards the baseline does not begin until September, 2029.

General Fund Taxes

Table 2 shows general fund tax revenue estimates for 2025-26 and 2026-27. The previous estimates are the general fund tax estimates included in 2025 Act 15, adjusted to reflect subsequent law changes and automatically adopted provisions of the OBBBA.

TABLE 2
Projected General Fund Tax Collections
(\$ in Millions)

	2024-25 <u>Actual</u>	<u>Previous Estimates</u>		<u>Revised Estimates</u> <u>January, 2026</u>	
		<u>2025-26</u>	<u>2026-27</u>	<u>2025-26</u>	<u>2026-27</u>
Individual Income	\$10,451.1	\$9,874.3	\$10,353.1	\$10,330.0	\$10,665.0
General Sales and Use	7,831.6	8,083.3	8,249.3	8,083.3	8,249.3
Corporate Income/Franchise	2,761.7	2,650.6	2,691.1	2,935.0	3,000.0
Public Utility	387.5	404.0	394.0	412.0	401.0
Excise					
Cigarette	369.6	348.0	326.0	348.0	322.0
Tobacco Products	83.0	85.0	84.0	78.0	76.0
Vapor Products	8.1	7.2	7.3	5.5	6.4
Liquor and Wine	72.9	74.0	76.0	76.0	80.0
Beer	8.4	8.2	8.1	7.9	7.8
Insurance Company	268.8	285.0	294.0	276.0	291.0
Miscellaneous Taxes	<u>120.2</u>	<u>124.8</u>	<u>133.8</u>	<u>134.0</u>	<u>144.0</u>
Total	\$22,362.9	\$21,944.4	\$22,616.7	\$22,685.7	\$23,242.5
Change from Prior Year		-\$418.5	\$672.3	\$322.8	\$556.8
Percent Change		-1.9%	3.1%	1.4%	2.5%

In total, these amounts are \$1,367.1 million higher than the previous estimates. The percentage difference is 3.1% higher. Nearly all of the increase (99.5%) is attributed to higher projections for individual income taxes and corporate income/franchise taxes, which are \$767.6 million and \$593.3 million higher than the previous forecast, respectively. The remaining \$6.2 million increase is comprised of increased estimates for miscellaneous taxes and utility taxes, offset by lower estimates for excise taxes and insurance premiums taxes. The estimates for sales and use taxes have not been changed.

Individual Income Tax. Total individual income tax collections were \$10,451.1 million in

2024-25, an increase of 7.5% over the prior year. Actual revenues in 2024-25 were \$31.1 million (0.3%) above this office's previous estimates. Based on preliminary collections information through December, 2025, total year-to-date collections for 2025-26 are higher by 6.8% (\$318.0 million) than such receipts during the same time period one year ago. Withholding collections, which are 5.7% (\$244.5 million) higher than the same period in 2024-25, and estimated payments, which are 20.3% (\$73.5 million) higher than the same period in 2024-25, are the main reasons for this growth.

Over the remainder of 2025-26, total individual income tax revenues are projected to decline by 7.6% relative to the same time period in 2024-25. The main factor contributing to this decline is the impact of the income tax reductions automatically adopted following enactment of the OBBBA and the following reductions contained in 2025 Act 15: (a) expanding the second bracket (4.40% rate) to cover additional taxable income that had been subject to the 5.30% rate; (b) creating an exclusion for up to \$24,000 (\$48,000 married-joint) of retirement income for filers aged 67 or older; and (c) increasing the maximum adoption expenses deduction from \$5,000 to \$15,000. The Act 15 changes took effect beginning in tax year 2025, and are estimated to reduce collections by \$700 million in 2025-26. The majority of this fiscal effect is expected to result in increased refunds over the remainder of the fiscal year, as taxpayers file their returns by April, 2026.

Total collections for 2025-26 are estimated at \$10,330 million, which is \$455.7 million (4.6%) higher than the previous estimates. One factor that is expected to help revenues over the rest of 2025-26 is the projected high level of capital gains realizations for tax year 2025. [Realizations for tax year 2026 are also expected to be significant, though not as high as tax years 2024 or 2025]. Additionally, the year-to-date withholding growth for 2025-26 (5.7%) is higher than had been anticipated.

Total individual income tax revenues for 2026-27 are projected to increase by 3.2% year-over-year, to a total of \$10,665 million. Relative to the previous estimates, these figures are higher by \$311.9 million (3.0%). Major contributing factors to this increase include an improved forecast for wages and salaries, which impacts withholding collections, and a higher forecast for capital gains.

General Sales and Use Tax. State sales and use tax revenues totaled \$7,831.6 million in 2024-25, which was an increase of 3.2% over the prior year. Sales tax revenues are estimated at \$8,083.3 million in 2025-26 and \$8,249.3 million in 2026-27, constituting annual growth of 3.2% in 2025-26 and 2.1% in 2026-27. These estimates are unchanged from prior estimates. Year-to-date sales tax collections through December are up \$143.9 million (4.4%) over the same period in the previous year. However, adjusting for previously enacted law changes and other one-time effects to collections, year-to-date growth is up 5.3%. State sales tax collections are expected to grow 2.4% for the remaining months of 2025-26. The estimate accounts for various sales tax exemptions enacted during the 2025-27 biennium, including the exemption for residential energy sold during the months of May through October, as well as certain refund payments anticipated to be made over the remainder of the biennium.

Corporate Income/Franchise Taxes. Corporate profits and year-to-date collections in 2025-26 have been far stronger than previously forecast. Economic profits, which are adjusted for inventory valuation and capital consumption at current cost (and thus not affected by federal tax laws), grew by 6.5% in 2025 (which is 12.3 percentage points more than forecasted in May). Given the strength in corporate profits, year-to-date collections have increased 10.4% compared to the

previous year, with estimated payments (7.4%) and collections from partnerships under the pass-through entity tax (43.5%) particularly strong. Based on the updated forecast and year-to-date collections, corporate income/franchise tax revenues are now projected to be \$2,935 million in 2025-26. This estimate is \$284.4 million (10.7%) higher than the previous forecast and reflects growth of 6.3% over prior year collections (\$2,761.7 million in 2024-25).

S&P Global forecasts that economic profits will increase 4.1% in 2026 and remain unchanged in 2027. Based on the updated forecast and the increased estimate for 2025-26, corporate income/franchise tax revenues are now estimated to be \$3,000 million in 2026-27, representing 2.2% growth over the prior year. This is an increase of \$308.9 million (11.5%) compared to previous estimates. Note that the forecast also reflects recent changes to federal tax law under OBBBA that are automatically adopted or impact collections for purposes of state tax law (such as deductions for Section 179 expenses and changes to the \$10,000 limit for deductions of state and local taxes).

Public Utility Taxes. Revenue from public utility taxes totaled \$387.5 million in 2024-25, \$3.5 million higher than previously estimated, and is estimated at \$412.0 million in 2025-26 and \$401.0 million in 2026-27. Year-over-year, these amounts represent an increase of 6.3% in 2025-26 and a decrease of 2.7% in 2026-27. Declining tax collections in 2026-27 are primarily attributed to the phase-in of the personal property tax exemption for telephone companies enacted under 2023 Act 140.

Relative to the previous estimates, these estimates reflect an increase of \$8.0 million in 2025-26 and \$7.0 million in 2026-27. The higher overall utility tax estimates are primarily attributable to increased estimates for gross receipts taxes on private light, heat, and power companies. Estimates of growth in sales by Wisconsin power companies of natural gas in 2025 and electricity in 2026 have improved since the previous forecast, increasing estimates of tax revenue for both 2025-26 and 2026-27.

Excise Taxes. General fund excise taxes are imposed on cigarettes, liquor (including wine and hard cider), other tobacco products, vapor products, and beer. Total excise tax revenues in 2024-25 were \$542.0 million, of which \$369.6 million (68.2%) was from the excise tax on cigarettes. Total excise taxes declined 5.2% in 2024-25, driven by declines of 8.2% and 3.2% in cigarette and tobacco products tax revenues, respectively. Total excise tax revenues are estimated to decrease by 4.9% to \$515.4 million in 2025-26 and by 4.5% to \$492.2 million in 2026-27. Compared to the previous estimates, these amounts are lower by \$7.0 million in 2025-26 and \$9.2 million in 2026-27.

Tobacco products tax revenues are the primary reason for this revision and are estimated at \$78.0 million in 2025-26 and \$76.0 million in 2026-27, constituting annual revenue declines of 6.0% and 2.6%, respectively. These estimates are lower than previously forecast by \$7.0 million in 2025-26 and \$8.0 million in 2026-27. These revisions are largely due to lower than anticipated year-to-date growth in sales of tobacco (-8.5%), and a persistent downward trend in annual revenues.

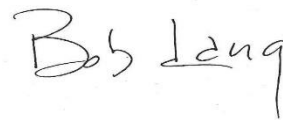
Insurance Premiums Taxes. Insurance premiums taxes were \$268.8 million in 2024-25, which is \$6.2 million lower than previously estimated. Revenues are now projected to be \$276.0 million in

2025-26, and \$291.0 million in 2026-27, reflecting growth of 2.7% and 5.4%, respectively. Compared to the previous estimates, these estimates represent decreases in insurance premiums tax revenues of \$9.0 million in 2025-26 and \$3.0 million in 2026-27. The new estimates are decreased to reflect lower actual collections than estimated for 2024-25 and lower than anticipated year-to-date collections (1.8% growth).

Miscellaneous Taxes. Miscellaneous taxes include the real estate transfer fee (RETF), municipal and circuit court-related fees, a small amount from the occupational tax on coal, and certain other fees and taxes. Miscellaneous tax revenues were \$120.2 million in 2024-25, of which 87.8% was generated from the RETF. Total miscellaneous tax collections in 2024-25 represented an increase of 10.8% from the prior fiscal year. Miscellaneous tax revenues are estimated at \$134.0 million in 2025-26 and \$144.0 million in 2026-27, which is higher than the previous estimate by \$9.2 million in 2025-26 and \$10.2 million in 2026-27. The revised estimates primarily reflect strong year-to-date growth in adjusted collections of the RETF (24.9%).

This office will continue to monitor state revenues and expenditures and new economic forecasts, and notify you and your colleagues of any future adjustments that may be necessary.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob Lang". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Robert Wm. Lang
Director

RWL/ml

cc: Members, Wisconsin Legislature

ATTACHMENT

Summary of National Economic Indicators S&P Global Market Intelligence Baseline Forecast January, 2026, and May, 2025 (\$ in Billions)

	May, 2025			January, 2026			Difference from May		
	2025	2026	2027	2025	2026	2027	2025	2026	2027
Nominal Gross Domestic Product	\$30,643.3	\$32,005.7	\$33,173.3	\$30,778.5	\$32,380.7	\$33,831.7	\$135.2	\$375.0	\$658.4
% Change	5.0%	4.4%	3.6%	5.1%	5.2%	4.5%	0.1%	0.8%	0.8%
Real Gross Domestic Product	\$23,618.0	\$24,008.1	\$24,402.8	\$23,863.2	\$24,420.5	\$24,889.9	\$245.1	\$412.5	\$487.0
% Change	1.3%	1.7%	1.6%	2.2%	2.3%	1.9%	0.8%	0.7%	0.3%
Consumer Price Index (% Change)	3.4%	2.9%	2.2%	2.7%	2.5%	2.8%	-0.7%	-0.4%	0.6%
Personal Income	\$25,787.8	\$27,043.2	\$28,425.6	\$26,094.8	\$27,464.9	\$29,084.6	\$307.0	\$421.7	\$659.0
% Change	4.6%	4.9%	5.1%	4.8%	5.3%	5.9%	0.2%	0.4%	0.8%
Nominal PCE	\$20,954.1	\$21,799.2	\$22,643.1	\$20,957.0	\$22,062.6	\$23,045.0	\$2.9	\$263.3	\$402.0
% Change	5.7%	4.0%	3.9%	5.3%	5.3%	4.5%	-0.4%	1.2%	0.6%
Economic Profits	\$3,605.6	\$3,688.1	\$3,694.4	\$4,048.1	\$4,214.4	\$4,214.6	\$442.5	\$526.3	\$520.2
% Change	-5.8%	2.3%	0.2%	6.5%	4.1%	0.0%	12.3%	1.8%	-0.2%
Unemployment Rate (Percent)	4.4%	4.9%	5.0%	4.3%	4.7%	4.6%	-0.1%	-0.2%	-0.4%
Total Nonfarm Employment (Millions)	159.5	159.9	160.2	159.4	160.2	161.1	-0.1	0.3	0.8
% Change	1.0%	0.2%	0.2%	0.9%	0.5%	0.5%	-0.1%	0.2%	0.3%
Light Vehicle Sales (Million of Units)	15.48	14.97	15.56	16.13	15.79	15.98	0.65	0.82	0.42
% Change	-2.0%	-3.3%	4.0%	1.7%	-2.1%	1.2%	3.7%	1.2%	-2.7%
Sales of New and Existing Homes (Millions of Units)	4.973	5.474	5.643	4.747	5.175	5.523	-0.226	-0.299	-0.120
% Change	4.7%	10.1%	3.1%	-0.1%	9.0%	6.7%	-4.8%	-1.0%	3.6%
Housing Starts (Millions)	1.385	1.342	1.324	1.344	1.309	1.312	-0.041	-0.033	-0.012
% Change	1.3%	-3.1%	-1.3%	-1.9%	-2.6%	0.3%	-3.2%	0.5%	1.6%