

Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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State of Wisconsin

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Senator Alberta Darling, Senate Chair
Representative Robin Vos, Assembly Chair
Joint Committee on Finance
State Capitol
Madison, WI 53702

Dear Senator Darling and Representative Vos:

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

Based on our analysis, we project the closing, gross general fund balance at the end of this biennium to be -\$143.2 million. This is \$215.9 million below the \$72.7 million balance that was projected at the time of preparation of the last general fund condition statement on October 17, 2011. The \$215.9 million is the net result of: (1) a revenue decrease of \$4.5 million due to enactment of 2011 Act 49; (2) a \$272.8 million decrease in estimated tax collections; (3) a \$6.3 million decrease in departmental revenues; (4) a \$44.5 million decrease in sum sufficient appropriation expenditures; (5) a reduction of \$20.0 million in compensation reserves; (6) a reduction of \$1.3 million in the transfer to the injured patients and families compensation fund; and (7) a \$1.9 million increase in estimated lapses to the general fund.

As indicated, the gross balance is projected to be -\$143.2 million. If the required statutory balance of \$65 million is taken into account, the net balance at the end of the biennium (June 30, 2013) is projected to be -\$208.2 million.

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

TABLE 1**2011-13 General Fund Condition Statement**

	<u>2011-12</u>	<u>2012-13</u>
Revenues		
Opening Balance, July 1	\$85,567,000	\$11,755,600
Taxes	13,194,600,000	13,603,500,000
Departmental Revenues		
Tribal Gaming	27,154,400	28,645,200
Other	<u>648,056,000</u>	<u>576,997,700</u>
Total Available	\$13,955,377,400	\$14,220,898,500
Appropriations, Transfers, and Reserves		
Gross Appropriations	\$13,996,186,500	\$14,765,544,300
Sum Sufficient Reestimates	-36,508,800	-7,982,300
Transfers to:		
Transportation Fund	22,500,000	137,627,000
Injured Patients and Families Compensation Fund	233,747,100	0
Veterans Trust Fund	5,000,000	0
Compensation Reserves	28,790,000	61,910,000
Less Lapses	<u>-306,093,000</u>	<u>-593,034,800</u>
Net Appropriations	\$13,943,621,800	\$14,364,064,200
Balance		
Gross Balance	\$11,755,600	-\$143,165,700
Required Statutory Balance	<u>-65,000,000</u>	<u>-65,000,000</u>
Net Balance, June 30	-\$53,244,400	-\$208,165,700

Although the biennial change in estimated departmental revenues is relatively small (-\$6.3 million), there are three items that should be noted. First, circuit court fees are projected to be \$12.6 million below the \$104.0 million estimated at the time of enactment of the budget. Second, estimated tobacco settlement revenues have been reduced by \$19.0 million in 2011-12, primarily due to litigation that will likely not be resolved in this fiscal year. Finally, the U.S. Department of Justice, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and states' attorneys general have entered into a mortgage settlement agreement with Bank of America, Wells Fargo, JPMorgan Chase, Citigroup, and Residential Capital, LLC (formerly Ally Financial). Under the agreement, it is anticipated that Wisconsin will receive \$31.6 million. Based on discussions between the Attorney General and the administration, of the amounts received by the state, \$25.6 million will be deposited to the general fund as GPR-Earned in 2011-12, and the remaining \$6 million will be retained by the Department of Justice to be allocated at a later date.

Net expenditures are projected to decrease by \$67.7 million. A significant factor in the

reduction is due to debt service costs. Estimated GPR debt service costs are reduced by \$55 million in 2011-12 and \$8 million in 2012-13 from the amounts projected in 2011 Act 32 because of two factors. First, the state has sold its general obligation bonds at a premium and applied most of these premium proceeds to current year debt service, in lieu of using the budgeted amounts to pay those costs. A bond that sells at a premium does so because the interest rate on the bond is higher than the market rate, making the bond worth more to the buyer. Most of these up-front premium payments were used to reduce GPR debt service, with the remainder being applied to the capital improvement fund to be used in lieu of future bonding. Second, GPR debt service is estimated to be lower because current projected interest costs on the funds borrowed under the state's commercial paper program are significantly less than the amounts budgeted in Act 32 for these short-term obligations.

In addition, the administration indicates that compensation reserve amounts in 2012-13 may be reduced by \$20.0 million due to anticipated lower premium costs of the state's health insurance program.

The following additional points should be noted about the condition statement of Table 1. First, it incorporates the fiscal effects of all bills enacted to date (through 2011 Act 114). Second, it does not reflect the estimated shortfall in the private bar appropriation of the Office of the State Public Defender. It is projected that this appropriation will incur a deficit of \$5.8 million by the end of the 2011-13 biennium. Third, Table 1 does not reflect any appropriation changes to the medical assistance (MA) program. On January 26, 2012, this office distributed a memorandum to the members of the Legislature entitled "Medical Assistance Program Status." That memorandum indicated that the MA program faced a potential shortfall of \$140.9 million in the biennium. The memorandum further listed a series of savings initiatives identified by the Department of Health Services that are intended to address the shortfall.

Section 16.50(7) of the statutes establishes a process that must be followed if there is a revenue shortfall. Under this provision, if at any time after enactment of the biennial budget, the Secretary of the Department of Administration determines that previously authorized expenditures will exceed revenues in either year of the biennium by more than 0.5% of the estimated GPR appropriations for that fiscal year, the Secretary is required to immediately notify the Governor, the presiding officer of each house of the Legislature, and the Joint Committee on Finance of the revenue shortfall. Following such notification, the Governor is required to submit a bill to correct the imbalance between projected revenues and expenditures.

Under the projections of this report, expenditures in 2012-13 exceed revenues by \$143.2 million, which is \$71.4 million greater than the 0.5% threshold. The administration is currently discussing steps it might take to address the budget shortfall, including debt refinancing and restructuring.

General Fund Taxes

The following section presents information regarding general fund taxes for the 2011-13 biennium, including a discussion of the national economic forecast and general fund tax revenue estimates for fiscal years 2011-12 and 2012-13.

National Economic Review and Forecast. This office first prepared revenue estimates for the 2011-13 biennium in January, 2011, based on IHS Global Insight, Inc.'s January, 2011, forecast for the U.S. economy. That forecast predicted that temporary payroll tax reductions for employees and depreciation incentives for businesses scheduled to go into effect in January, 2011, would reinforce the economic growth that was occurring in late 2010. These developments, along with a gradually improving employment outlook and strength in the business investment and export sectors, were expected to generate real (inflation-adjusted) gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 3.2% in 2011, 2.9% in 2012, and 3.1% in 2013. The primary downside risks to that forecast included another possible downturn in the housing market and Europe's sovereign debt problems.

In May, 2011, this office raised its revenue estimates for 2010-11 and for the 2011-13 biennium. The upward revisions were based mainly on stronger than expected individual income tax collections through April, 2011, which more than offset comparatively weak revenues from the sales tax and the corporate income and franchise tax. The revisions also incorporated Global Insight's May, 2011, forecast for the U.S. economy. That updated forecast noted that economic growth in the first quarter of 2011 had come in below January's expectations, and that rising commodity prices were contributing to consumer price inflation. In most respects, however, Global Insight's May, 2011, forecast did not vary significantly from the January, 2011, forecast.

According to Global Insight's latest analysis (February, 2012), 2011 saw the U.S. economy continue its recovery from the deep recession of 2008-2009, albeit at a slower pace than projected in the May, 2011, forecast. Some of that weakness can be attributed to specific events. For instance, the earthquake that struck Japan in March disrupted supply chains in the U.S. automobile sector, with the effect of temporarily suppressing vehicle sales. In addition, unrest in the Middle East and North Africa caused a spike in world oil prices in the first half of the year that led to higher gasoline prices for U.S. consumers. These events contributed to the economy's relatively poor results in the first two quarters of 2011, when real GDP grew at annual rates of 0.4% and 1.3%, respectively, well below the 1.8% and 3.3% rates Global Insight had assumed in its May, 2011, forecast.

Several more persistent issues also limited growth in 2011. Among these was the sluggish U.S. housing sector. Housing starts are estimated to have increased by 3.7% in 2011, compared to the 7.6% growth rate Global Insight had expected in May. Despite these modest gains, the number of housing starts last year (607,000 units) was less than one-third the starts (2,073,000 units) that occurred in 2005. During that same period, the annual value of residential construction (adjusted for inflation) fell from \$765.2 billion in 2005 to \$316.5 billion in 2011. This massive decline in residential construction activity and the associated multiplier effects have negatively impacted GDP growth every year since 2005. Other indicators confirm the

housing sector's continued weakness. New home sales fell an estimated 5.7% in 2011, while sales of existing homes rose 2.5%. The average price of an existing home is estimated to have fallen by 3.2%.

In Global Insight's view, the key to a sustained recovery in the housing sector is employment growth, in part because the rate of household formation (an important factor in housing demand) increases when new jobs are created. In that regard, the most recent figures from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics indicate that total non-farm payrolls increased by approximately 1.8 million from December, 2010, to December, 2011. That growth occurred exclusively in the private sector, as private payroll gains of 2.1 million significantly outweighed the loss of 271,000 government jobs. The employment gains in 2011 exhibited steady progress (total non-farm payrolls grew each month of 2011), and the increases were in line with Global Insight's May, 2011, forecast. This growth notwithstanding, total non-farm payrolls in the final quarter of 2011 were still nearly 6.0 million below where they stood in early 2008.

Concern over government finances dominated much of the economic news in the second half of 2011. In early August, Standard & Poor's removed its AAA credit rating from long-term U.S. government debt. That downgrade appears to have had little immediate impact on U.S. government borrowing costs, however, as yields on ten-year and thirty-year U.S. Treasury obligations ended the year lower than they had been prior to S&P's action.

One likely explanation for that rally in U.S. Treasury securities, and the dollar's late-year appreciation against the Euro, was Europe's sovereign debt problems. Reminiscent of the financial crisis triggered by the 2008 collapse of Lehman Brothers, the "worst-case" fears in this case are not limited to the direct losses that might result from a default by one or more of the weaker Eurozone countries (a group often defined to include Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Greece, and Spain), but also include the broader "contagion" risks such defaults could pose to the entire international financial system. Through mechanisms such as the European Financial Stability Facility, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund have sought to bolster the European banking and financial systems, in part by providing loans to several of the weaker Eurozone member states. Those efforts notwithstanding, the Eurozone appears to have fallen back into recession in the fourth quarter of 2011. Going forward, Global Insight cites unresolved issues in Europe as "by far the biggest uncertainty facing the global economy."

Despite the various concerns outlined above, U.S. economic activity improved in the second half of 2011. In large measure, those gains resulted from growth in personal consumption expenditures, as moderating prices enhanced consumers' real purchasing power. Driven by improved demand for durable goods, especially for new motor vehicles, real consumer spending increased at annual rates of 1.7% and 2.0% in the third and fourth quarters of 2011, respectively, markedly better than the second quarter's 0.7% increase. Other sectors contributing to the economy's growth in 2011 included exports, which in real terms grew 6.8%, bolstered by strong demand from emerging economies, and business investment in equipment and software, which registered real growth of 10.3%.

On balance, the most recent figures indicate that real GDP grew 1.7% in 2011, with much

of that increase coming in the second half of the year. Nominal GDP (not adjusted for inflation) increased 3.9%. Those results were somewhat lower than Global Insight's May, 2011, forecast, which projected real GDP to increase 2.7% and nominal GDP to increase 4.5% in 2011.

In its February forecast, Global Insight expects the U.S. economy's moderate growth to continue, with real GDP increasing 2.1% in 2012 and 2.3% in 2013, and nominal GDP growing 3.4% and 3.7%. That forecast is based on the following key assumptions. First, fiscal policy will effectively tighten as real nondefense federal spending on goods and services falls 1.7% in 2012 and 2.6% in 2013, and real defense spending falls 2.0% in 2012 and 3.9% in 2013. Second, the temporary extension of payroll tax reductions and emergency unemployment insurance benefits that occurred in late 2011 will be extended through all of 2012, and then phased out over several years. Third, the automatic federal spending cuts scheduled to begin in 2013 under the Budget Control Act of 2011 will not occur. Instead, Congress and the President will agree to a package that combines spending cuts and tax increases that mostly go into effect in 2014. In the interim, the tax cuts enacted under President Bush in 2001 and 2003 will be extended through 2013. Fourth, oil prices will rise by 7.2% in 2012 and by 3.2% in 2013. Fifth, the U.S. Federal Reserve will keep its target range for the federal funds rate at 0.0% to 0.25% until at least late 2014. Sixth, the U.S. dollar will strengthen against the Euro, but continue its long-term decline against emerging market currencies. Finally, GDP growth in the United States' major-currency trading partners will slow to 1.0% in 2012, down from 1.7% in 2011, reflecting the Eurozone recession, while GDP growth for the United States' other important trading partners will be 4.1% in 2012, down from 5.2% in 2011.

GDP. Real GDP is now projected to grow 2.1% in 2012 and 2.3% in 2013. Those increases are somewhat lower than Global Insight had projected in its May, 2011, forecast, when real GDP was expected to increase 2.9% and 2.8% in 2012 and 2013, respectively. The expectations for nominal GDP have been similarly reduced since May, from 4.4% and 4.5% in 2012 and 2013, respectively, to 3.4% and 3.7%. The latest projections for GDP growth reflect Global Insight's generally more cautious outlook for the U.S. and world economies, compared to its May, 2011, forecast.

Consumer Prices. Higher commodity prices in the first half of the year caused the consumer price index (CPI) to increase 3.1% in 2011. Core inflation, which excludes food and energy costs, rose by a more moderate 1.7%. Those results were in line with the May, 2011, forecast. Led by falling gasoline prices, consumer inflation eased in the second half of 2011, and that general trend is expected to continue with the CPI increasing 2.0% in 2012 and 1.8% in 2013.

Monetary Policy. The U.S. Federal Reserve kept short-term interest rates at historically low levels throughout 2011, with its target range for the federal funds rate at 0.0% to 0.25%. That policy is not expected to change soon, as on January 25, 2012, the Federal Reserve stated that economic conditions, including low rates of resource utilization and a subdued outlook for inflation over the medium run, are likely to warrant the continuation of these exceptionally low rates at least through late 2014. That statement contrasted with the Federal Reserve's earlier pronouncements, which indicated that it intended to keep the exceptionally low short-term

interest rates currently in place through at least mid-2013. Global Insight's February, 2012, forecast does, however, continue to expect a new \$600 billion round of quantitative easing in the second quarter of 2012, targeted mainly at mortgage-backed securities.

Personal Consumption. Nominal personal consumption expenditures increased by an estimated 4.7% in 2011, slightly less than the 5.1% increase projected in the May, 2011, forecast. The gains in 2011 were widely distributed across most expenditure categories. Spending for consumer durables, which are generally subject to state sales tax, increased 7.0%, led by a 14.7% increase on expenditures for new motor vehicles. Spending for services, which are typically not subject to sales tax, increased 3.2%. Under the latest forecast, personal consumption is expected to grow 3.6% in 2012 and 3.6% in 2013, with broad-based gains again led by durable goods, purchases of which are projected to increase by 4.3% and 4.1% in 2012 and 2013, respectively. For the most part, these latest projections are modestly lower than those in the May, 2011, forecast.

Employment. Building on a much better than expected gain of 243,000 jobs in January, 2012 (preliminary estimate), average monthly non-farm payrolls are expected to grow by 1.9 million to 133.3 million in 2012, and by 2.0 million to 135.3 million in 2013. While these projections have steadily increased in recent months (Global Insight's October, 2011, forecast, for instance, expected non-farm payrolls to average just 133.5 million in 2013), they are still somewhat below the May, 2011, projections, which anticipated payroll gains of 2.3 million and 2.5 million in 2012 and 2013.

As was true in 2011, all of the projected employment gains in the latest forecast should occur in the private sector, as government payrolls contract by an additional 212,000 in 2012 and 23,000 in 2013. The national unemployment rate, which is a function of both the number of jobs and the number of labor market participants, is expected to decline during this period, averaging 8.3% in 2012 and 8.1% in 2013. In December, 2011, the national unemployment rate was 8.5%.

Housing. In late 2011, the National Association of Realtors reduced its earlier estimates of existing home sales dating back to 2007. While the adjustments apply more to sales volumes than to year-over-year changes, the revised figures indicate that the initial stages of the housing market's decline in 2007 were more severe than previously thought. In 2012 and 2013, Global Insight expects existing home sales to increase by 8.3% and 8.1%, respectively, due to better affordability and improving economic conditions. The average price of an existing home is projected to decline 2.3% in 2012 before increasing 3.2% in 2013 in what is expected to be the start of a multi-year recovery in house prices.

Residential construction activity improved in the final quarter of 2011, when housing starts and housing permits rose to their highest levels of the year. In 2012, housing starts are projected to increase 22.1%, to 741,000 units. That momentum should continue in 2013, as an improving economy combines with pent-up demand for new housing to propel a 33.6% year-over-year increase in housing starts, to 990,000 units. The latest estimates, however, are still well below those in the May, 2011, forecast, when Global Insight expected housing starts to total 1.02 million units in 2012 and 1.42 million units in 2013. As a result, the latest projection for the real

value of residential construction activity in 2013 of \$400.9 billion is \$115.7 billion less than was projected in the May, 2011, forecast (\$516.6 billion). This downward revision in the outlook for residential construction is a principal explanation for the more cautious tone of Global Insight's February, 2012, forecast, compared to the May, 2011, forecast.

Corporate Profits. Driven by a combination of factors such as strong profit margins and significant contributions from overseas activities, corporate profits have rebounded substantially from the depressed levels of 2008-2009. In 2010, for example, economic profits increased 32.2% from the prior year. Those gains continued in 2011, with economic profits increasing 8.5% and before-tax book profits increasing 4.8%. Those results were significantly better than Global Insight projected in May, when it anticipated increases of 5.2% and 0.4%, respectively.

As year-over-year comparisons become more challenging, and continued profit margin expansion becomes more difficult to achieve, Global Insight expects the recent gains in corporate profitability to moderate. The February, 2012, forecast calls for economic profits to decline 0.9% in 2012 and to be flat in 2013. The May forecast had expected economic profits to increase 1.5% in 2012 and 2.4% in 2013. Similarly, before-tax book profits are now expected to increase 2.5% and 8.5% in 2012 and 2013, respectively, compared to the 8.6% and 10.0% increases projected in May.

Business Investment. Business investment in equipment and software continued to be one of the primary supports to the U.S. economy in 2011, with real growth of 10.3% over the prior year, as strong profits and large cash reserves enabled businesses to make purchases they deferred during the recession. This positive performance was generally in line with the May, 2011, projections. Looking forward, the latest forecast expects the gains in this sector to continue, with real increases of 7.9% in 2012 and 7.6% in 2013.

Even as businesses increased outlays for equipment and software in recent years, their investment in nonresidential structures was falling by 21.2% in 2009 and 15.8% in 2010, as a result of tight credit markets, high vacancy rates, and weak business conditions. In 2011, investment in nonresidential structures increased 4.1%, which was significantly better than the 3.0% decline Global Insight had projected in May. As a result, the nonresidential structure sector contributed to overall GDP growth in 2011, following several years in which it exerted a significant drag on the economy's performance. In the latest forecast, Global Insight expects the modest recovery in nonresidential structures to continue, with investment increasing 4.0% in 2012 and 1.3% in 2013.

The projections outlined above and summarized in Table 2 reflect Global Insight's February, 2012, "baseline" forecast for the U.S. economy. Global Insight also prepares "pessimistic" and "optimistic" scenarios. Under the pessimistic scenario, given a 25% chance of occurring, the sovereign debt crisis in Europe escalates, causing European credit markets to freeze and credit conditions in the rest of the world to tighten. At the same time, policymakers in the U.S. fail to extend the payroll tax cuts and emergency unemployment insurance benefits beyond March 1, 2012. The results include real GDP growth rates that are much lower (0.6%

and 0.2%) and unemployment rates that are higher (8.7% and 9.5%) in 2012 and 2013, respectively, than projected under the baseline forecast.

In the optimistic scenario, to which Global Insight assigns a 20% probability, the improved economic growth that occurred in the final quarter of 2011 carries into 2012, and is reinforced by the extension of the payroll tax cuts through 2012. Under this scenario, world financial markets avoid the worst-case impacts from Europe's sovereign debt problems, and a self-sustaining cycle of employment gains, investment, and personal consumption generates higher rates of real GDP growth in 2012 (3.3%) and 2013 (4.2%) than are projected under the baseline forecast.

TABLE 2

**Summary of National Economic Indicators
IHS Global Insight, Inc., Baseline Forecast, February, 2012
(\$ in Billions)**

	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>
Nominal Gross Domestic Product	\$14,526.6	\$15,087.8	\$15,599.0	\$16,177.3
Percent Change	4.2%	3.9%	3.4%	3.7%
Real Gross Domestic Product	\$13,088.0	\$13,313.4	\$13,597.3	\$13,907.8
Percent Change	3.0%	1.7%	2.1%	2.3%
Consumer Prices (Percent Change)	1.6%	3.1%	2.0%	1.8%
Personal Income	\$12,373.5	\$12,961.0	\$13,410.7	\$13,941.7
Percent Change	3.7%	4.7%	3.5%	4.0%
Personal Consumption Expenditures	\$10,245.5	\$10,722.6	\$11,111.3	\$11,510.6
Percent Change	3.8%	4.7%	3.6%	3.6%
Unemployment Rate	9.6%	9.0%	8.3%	8.1%
Total Non-Farm Payrolls (Millions)	129.9	131.4	133.3	135.3
Percent Change	-0.7%	1.2%	1.5%	1.5%
Light Vehicle Sales (Millions of Units)	11.55	12.74	13.64	14.73
Percent Change	11.1%	10.3%	7.1%	8.0%
Housing Starts (Millions of Units)	0.585	0.607	0.741	0.990
Percent Change	5.6%	3.7%	22.1%	33.6%
Economic Profits	\$1,800.1	\$1,953.6	\$1,935.8	\$1,936.7
Percent Change	32.2%	8.5%	-0.9%	0.0%

General Fund Tax Projections. Table 3 shows our revised general fund tax revenue estimates for the 2011-13 biennium. The estimates are based on Global Insight's February, 2012, forecast of the U.S. economy and include the impact of all tax law changes enacted to date.

TABLE 3
Projected General Fund Tax Collections
(\$ Millions)

	2010-11 <u>Actual</u>	<u>Previous Estimates</u>		<u>Revised Estimates</u> <u>February, 2012</u>	
		<u>2011-12</u>	<u>2012-13</u>	<u>2011-12</u>	<u>2012-13</u>
Individual Income	\$6,700.7	\$6,865.5	\$7,220.2	\$6,825.0	\$7,120.0
General Sales and Use	4,109.0	4,269.8	4,387.1	4,250.0	4,365.0
Corporate Income and Franchise	852.9	880.8	876.1	860.0	855.0
Public Utility	341.3	344.6	352.6	361.0	363.0
Excise					
Cigarette	604.8	615.0	610.0	590.0	580.0
Liquor and Wine	45.8	47.1	48.2	47.4	48.4
Tobacco Products	60.9	63.6	65.7	64.1	66.2
Beer	9.3	9.5	9.5	9.1	9.0
Insurance Company	140.0	147.0	150.0	140.0	145.0
Miscellaneous	<u>47.2</u>	<u>51.6</u>	<u>57.0</u>	<u>48.0</u>	<u>51.9</u>
Total	\$12,911.8	\$13,294.5	\$13,776.4	\$13,194.6	\$13,603.5
Change from Prior Year					
Amount		\$382.7	\$481.9	\$282.8	\$408.9
Percent		3.0%	3.6%	2.2%	3.1%

As shown in the table, total general fund tax collections are estimated at \$13,194.6 million in 2011-12 and \$13,603.5 million in 2012-13. These amounts are lower than the previous estimates by \$99.9 million in the first year and \$172.9 million in the second year, for a biennial decrease of \$272.8 million. The biennial reduction is approximately -1.0%. The estimates for most of the tax sources have been decreased, with the largest reductions in the individual income tax, cigarette tax, sales and use tax, and corporate income and franchise tax.

The revised revenue projections reflect year-to-date collections data, the new economic forecast, and the effects of a number of law changes that will reduce revenues during the remainder of 2011-12 and in 2012-13. Through January, total tax collections are 3.3% higher than the amount collected during the same period last year, which is slightly above the 3.0% annual growth rate assumed in our previous projections. However, it is anticipated that growth will moderate over the remainder of this fiscal year as the impact of a number of law changes becomes evident. In addition, as discussed previously, the current economic forecast is less favorable than last May's forecast.

Individual Income Tax. State individual income tax revenues were \$6,700.7 million in 2010-11 and are currently estimated at \$6,825.0 million in 2011-12 and \$7,120.0 million in 2012-13. Relative to the previous figures, the current estimates are lower by \$40.5 million in the first year and \$100.2 million in the second year. On a year-to-year basis, the current estimates reflect an increase of 1.9% for 2011-12 and 4.3% for 2012-13. The revised estimates incorporate the effects of a number of law changes estimated to reduce revenues by approximately \$175 million in 2011-12 and \$225 million in 2012-13. The most significant law changes are increased deductions for medical insurance premiums, tax deferrals for capital gains that are reinvested in Wisconsin-based businesses, and exclusions and deductions related to health savings accounts. Income tax collections will also be reduced as a result of the additional state and local employee retirement and health insurance contributions required under 2011 Act 10.

Based on preliminary collection information through January, 2012, individual income tax revenues for the current fiscal year are 3.6% higher than such revenues through the same period in 2010-11. However, taxpayers may not have adjusted their withholding and declaration payments to reflect some of the above-referenced law changes, and this could result in higher refunds and lower tax payments in the coming months. This position is supported by January, 2012, collection totals, which were 2.1% lower than collections for the same period last year, when adjusted for timing differences. The revised estimates also reflect a weakening of the current economic forecast relative to the forecast for May, 2011, as growth in personal income, gross domestic product, and employment are estimated to be lower for 2012 and 2013 than previously estimated.

General Sales and Use Tax. In 2010-11, state sales and use tax collections were \$4,109.0 million, which was 4.2% higher than the prior year. Sales tax collections through January, 2011, are 3.9% higher than the same period in 2010-11. State sales and use tax revenues are currently estimated at \$4,250.0 million in 2011-12 and \$4,365.0 million in 2012-13, which represents increased revenue of 3.4% in the first year and 2.7% in the second year. These estimates are \$19.8 million lower in the first year and \$22.1 million lower in the second year than the previous estimates. The reductions in the estimates are based primarily on reduced growth in Global Insight's forecast for taxable personal consumption expenditures for the most recent forecast as compared to the May, 2011, forecast.

Corporate Income and Franchise Tax. Corporate income and franchise taxes were \$852.9 million in 2010-11. Collections are projected to be \$860.0 million in 2011-12 and \$855.0 million in 2012-13. These amounts represent an annual increase of approximately 1% in 2011-12, and a similar percentage decrease in 2012-13. The new estimates are lower than the previous estimates by \$20.8 million in 2011-12 and \$21.1 million in 2012-13.

The new estimates reflect year-to-date corporate income and franchise tax collections and estimated payments. Year-to-date collections are 2.1% lower than a year ago. However, 2010-11 collections included a relatively large one-time audit amount that, when accounted for, makes the change in year-to-date 2011-12 collections positive. In addition, year-to-date estimated payments are about 1.5% higher than a year ago. Corporate profits in 2012 and 2013 are forecast to plateau, after strong increases in 2010 and 2011. Economic profits increased 32.2% in 2010 and

8.5% in 2011. The forecast projects economic profits to decrease almost 1% in 2012, and to be essentially flat in 2013. Companies have been able to increase profits, despite a sluggish economy, primarily due to aggressive cost cutting measures, such as reducing spending and workforce. However, the ability of many companies to generate future profits from additional cost cutting measures is limited. In addition, under the forecast, overall business activity is projected to continue to expand, but at a slower pace than in 2010 and 2011. For example, real investment in equipment and software, which increased by 14.6% in 2010, and by an estimated 10.3% in 2011, is projected to increase by 7.9% in 2012, and 7.6% in 2013. Real durable goods purchases increased by 7.2% in 2010 and by an estimated 8.1% in 2011, but are forecast to increase by 5.6% in 2012, and 4.5% in 2013. Manufacturing output growth is projected to be 4.3% in 2012 and 3.4% in 2013, after increasing 5.4% in 2010 and by an estimated 4.5% in 2011.

The corporate income and franchise tax estimates have been adjusted to reflect the effect of certain law changes, including requiring corporations that are members of a unitary group to file combined returns, repealing the domestic production activities deduction, requiring throwback sales to be included 100% in the apportionment formula, allowing combined groups to use pre-2009 net business loss carry-forwards, and the phase-in of the state qualified production activities tax credit. In addition, the estimates have been adjusted to reflect enhanced tax law enforcement activities by the Department of Revenue. In part, the adjustments account for the estimated decrease in corporate income and franchise tax revenues in 2012-13.

Public Utility Taxes. Public utility tax revenues were \$341.3 million in 2010-11, and are currently projected at \$361.0 million in 2011-12 and \$363.0 million in 2012-13. These figures are higher than the previous estimates by \$16.4 million in the first year and \$10.4 million in the second year. Utility tax collections are currently expected to increase by 5.8% in 2011-12 and 0.6% in 2012-13. Private light, heat, and power companies are responsible for \$21.6 million of the \$26.8 million in additional estimated revenues over the two-year period. Private light, heat, and power companies are the largest taxpayer group among the public utilities, as they paid almost two-thirds of all public utility taxes in 2010-11. The additional estimated revenues reflect rate increases realized by private light, heat, and power companies due to new production plants being placed in service.

Excise Taxes. General fund excise taxes are imposed on cigarettes, other tobacco products, liquor (including wine and hard cider), and beer. Total excise tax revenues were \$720.9 million in 2010-11. Excise tax revenues are currently estimated at \$710.6 in 2011-12 and \$703.6 million in 2012-13, which represents reduced revenue of \$24.6 in the first year and \$29.8 million in the second year compared to the prior estimates. Excise tax revenues have been reduced largely due to a reduction in estimated cigarette tax collections, which represent approximately 83% of total estimated tax revenue.

Cigarette tax revenues were \$604.8 million in 2010-11, which was \$15.2 million lower than estimated. Cigarette tax revenues are now estimated at \$590.0 million for 2011-12 and \$580.0 million for 2012-13, representing growth rates of -2.4% and -1.7%, respectively. These estimates are lower than the previous estimates by \$25.0 million in 2011-12 and by \$30.0 million

in 2012-13 and are based on the lower than expected tax collections in 2010-11, as well as lower than expected year-to-date tax collections.

Insurance Premiums Taxes. Insurance premiums taxes were \$140.0 million in 2010-11. Premiums tax collections are projected to be \$140.0 million in 2011-12 and \$145.0 million in 2012-13. The estimate for 2011-12 reflects year-to-date collections which are marginally lower (-0.07%) than in 2010-11. Industry forecasts project modest to solid annual increases in sales and premiums in 2012 and 2013. The revised estimates are lower than the prior estimates by \$7.0 million in 2011-12 and \$5.0 million in 2012-13.

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 some estate tax revenue from ongoing lawsuit settlements. Miscellaneous tax revenues were \$47.2 million in 2010-11, and are estimated at \$48.0 million in 2011-12 and \$51.9 million in 2012-13. These estimates are lower than the previous estimates by \$3.6 million in the first year and \$5.1 million in the second year. The reduction in estimated revenue is due, in part, to lower than expected year-to-date RETF collections and, in part, to the revised forecast for sales of new and existing homes as compared to the prior estimates.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob". The letters are stylized and cursive.

Robert Wm. Lang
Director

RWL/sas