Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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State of Wisconsin

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

Dear Representative Born and Senator Marklein:

Annually, this office prepares general fund revenue and expenditure projections for the Legislature.

In odd-numbered years, our report includes estimated general fund revenues and expenditures for the current fiscal year and tax collection projections for each year of the next biennium. This report presents the conclusions of our analysis.

Comparison with the Administration's November 21, 2022, Report

On November 21, 2022, the Departments of Administration and Revenue submitted a report to the Governor and Legislature that identified general fund revenue and expenditure projections for the 2022-23 fiscal year and the 2023-25 biennium. That report, required by statute, identifies the magnitude of state agency biennial budget requests and presents a projection of general fund tax collections.

Our analysis indicates that for the three-year period, aggregate general fund tax collections will be slightly lower (-$94.2 million) than those of the November 21, 2022, report ($60.7 million in 2022-23, -$74.7 million in 2023-24, and -$80.2 million in 2024-25).

Based upon the November 21 report, the administration's general fund condition statement for 2022-23 reflects a gross ending balance of $6,576.4 million and a net balance (after consideration of the $95.0 million required statutory balance) of $6,481.4 million.

Our analysis indicates a gross balance of $7,100.4 million and a net balance of $7,005.4 million. This is $524.0 million above that of the November 21 report. The 2022-23 general fund condition statement is shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1

Estimated 2022-23 General Fund Condition Statement

	2022-23
Revenues	
Opening Balance, July 1	$4,298,919,000
Taxes	21,353,300,000
Departmental Revenues	
Tribal Gaming	0
Other	712,036,300
Total Available	$26,364,255,300
Appropriations, Transfers, and Reserves	
Gross Appropriations	$19,731,372,000
Sum Sufficient Reestimates	45,259,800
Transfers to:	
Transportation Fund	97,289,300
MA Trust Fund	527,783,700
UI Trust Fund	60,000,000
Compensation Reserves	105,951,600
Less Lapses	-1,303,859,700
Net Appropriations	$19,263,796,700
Balances	
Gross Balance	$7,100,458,600
Less Required Statutory Balance	-95,000,000
Net Balance, June 30	$7,005,458,600

The factors that make up the $524.0 million difference are as follows. First, based on economic forecasts and tax collections to date, our estimated tax collections for 2022-23 are $60.7 million higher than the projection of the November 21 report. Next, there is a slight decrease in departmental revenues (non-tax receipts deposited into the general fund) of $4.3 million. Finally, net appropriations are projected to be $467.6 million below those of the November 21 report. The additional general fund balance of $524.0 million for 2022-23 is displayed as follows ($60.7 million - $4.3 million + $467.6 million = $524.0 million).

This reduction in net appropriations is due to an increase in the amounts expected to lapse (revert) to the general fund at the end of the 2022-23 fiscal year, offset by an increase in projected sum sufficient appropriations.

The projected lapse estimates for 2022-23 of our analysis exceed those of the November 21 report by $521.6 million. The two major items that contribute to the increased lapse amount are described below.

First, the GPR appropriation for the medical assistance program (MA) is projected to end the 2021-23 biennium with a surplus of $774.8 million. The MA lapse estimate of the November 21 report was based on the September 30, 2022, DHS projection of $504.9 million. On December 30, 2022, DHS increased the projection to $774.8 million. This is $269.9 million above that of the November 21 report. This surplus, accumulated over both years of the biennium, is primarily attributable to the higher federal matching rate for MA benefits that has been in effect during the biennium. The federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act of 2020 (FFCRA) provided a 6.2 percentage point increase to each state's Medicaid matching rate for the duration of the federal public health emergency (PHE) for the COVID-19 pandemic. While the 2021-23 GPR budget for MA was established based on the assumption that this higher rate would expire at the end of calendar year 2021, successive extensions of the PHE throughout the biennium have meant that the state has continued to receive more federal matching funds than anticipated, resulting in a reduction in GPR costs. Congress recently amended the FFCRA provision, as part of the 2023 federal appropriations act, to establish a gradual phase-out of the enhanced rate during calendar year 2023, so that the matching rate is no longer tied to the PHE. Under the revised provision, the 6.2 percentage point increase will be in effect for expenditures through the end of March of 2023, and a 5.0 percentage point increase will apply for the final quarter of the biennium.

Second, in the 2021-23 budget act, $202.4 million was set aside in the supplemental appropriation of the Joint Committee on Finance to fund the exemption of the personal property tax if legislation were to be enacted in the 2021-22 legislative session to eliminate the tax beginning with the January, 2022, assessments. Because that did not occur, the $202.4 million will lapse to the general fund on June 30, 2023.

The projected 2022-23 gross appropriations of our analysis exceed the amounts contained in the November 21 report by $54.0 million. Two major items account for most of this increase. In the 2021-23 budget, credits to the EITM zone (Foxconn) were budgeted at $37.4 million ($28.8 million in 2021-22 and $8.6 million in 2022-23). The $28.8 million was not claimed in the first year of the biennium and lapsed to the general fund. That $28.8 million and the $8.6 million have been paid in 2022-23. In addition, an increase of $21.4 million in 2022-23 is due to Illinois under Wisconsin's income tax reciprocity agreement with that state.

General Fund Revenues

The following sections present information related to general fund tax revenues for 2022-23 and the 2023-25 biennium. This includes a review of the U.S. economy in 2022, a summary of the national economic forecast for 2023 through 2025, and detailed general fund tax revenue estimates for the current fiscal year and the next biennium.

Review of the National Economy in 2022

This office prepared updated revenue estimates for the 2021-23 biennium in January, 2022, based on the January, 2022, S&P Global Market Intelligence (S&P Global), formerly known as IHS Markit, forecast for the U.S. economy. The forecast predicted real gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 4.1% in 2022 and 2.5% in 2023. The forecast assumed that, after the winter increase of COVID-19 infections, continued expansion of the economy in 2022 would be supported by the transition of COVID-19 from pandemic to endemic (in which COVID-19 continues to circulate among the population more predictably), the gradual easing of supply disruptions and labor shortages, and relatively accommodative financial conditions.

The January, 2022, S&P Global forecast was based on the following assumptions. First, a winter increase in COVID-19 infections caused by the Omicron variant was predicted to temporarily slow consumer spending on certain services; however, consumer behavior was expected to adjust to the risks of living alongside repeated variants of the virus. Second, all federal 2020 pandemic relief measures, as well as the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 (IIJA), were incorporated into the forecast. However, the potential effects of the Build Back Better plan were not included in S&P Global's baseline forecast, as its passage was uncertain. Third, strong revenues and federal financial support provided under ARPA would prevent state and local governments from experiencing a fiscal contraction. Fourth, it was expected that the Federal Reserve would end its purchases of new U.S. Treasurys and mortgage-backed securities (MBS) by mid-March of 2022, begin raising the federal funds rate in May of 2022, and allow its holdings of securities to diminish over 2023 and 2024. Fifth, the current tariffs and trade agreements made between the U.S. and China would remain in effect. Sixth, S&P Global projected that real, trade-weighted foreign GDP would grow by 3.8% in 2022, while foreign measures of inflation were expected to decline from around 3% in 2021 and 2022 to 2.3% in 2023. Finally, the price of Brent crude oil was expected to ease to $67 per barrel by 2025, down from the estimated $79 per barrel in the fourth quarter of 2021.

The national economy grew less than estimated. Real growth in U.S. GDP for 2022 is now estimated at 2.0%, which is 2.1 percentage points lower than previously estimated. However, nominal GDP grew slightly more than previously forecasted, supported by high levels of inflation. S&P Global estimates that nominal U.S. GDP grew 9.2% in 2022, which is 1.0 percentage point higher than previously estimated.

At the onset of 2022, the U.S. was seeing its highest levels of COVID-19 infections since the pandemic began. However, as the seven-day average of daily cases began to fall from its January, 2022, peak, news of the COVID-19 pandemic quickly gave way to new national and global concerns.

Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022. At its onset, the war disrupted the export of certain foods and fertilizers, including wheat and corn. Together, Ukraine and Russia account for 30% of all globally traded wheat. The war initially impacted Ukraine's ability to harvest and export wheat and other crops. These pressures began to ease as the year went on, but not before having an impact on global supply. Further, the United States, in addition to the European Union and several other countries, imposed numerous sanctions on Russia, including the ban of all Russian oil and gas. On December 3, 2022, several countries, including the U.S., members of the European Union, the U.K., Canada, Japan, and Australia, set a $60 per barrel price limit on Russian oil as a way to maintain the supply of Russian oil to the global market, while reducing the revenues the Russian Federation earns from oil sales. In response, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree banning the supply of Russian oil (from February through June, 2023) to nations that abide by the limit.

On top of ongoing supply shortages stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-

Ukraine conflict, other supply constraints also arose in 2022. U.S. companies struggled with labor shortages throughout 2022, which made meeting consumer demand difficult. In February, 2022, Abbott, the country's largest infant formula maker, recalled multiple products and shut down its Michigan facility due to the presence of bacteria at the site. This led to significant shortages of baby formula by May. In June, the same Abbott plant was closed due to severe storms and flooding, further hindering supply. In addition, ongoing lockdowns in China due to the country's zero-COVID policy, only recently lifted in late Fall of 2022, contributed to global supply chain interruptions, including the ongoing shortage of semiconductor chips.

In response to these supply shortages and increased consumer demand from savings accumulated during the pandemic, the consumer price index (CPI) continued to surge beyond expectations. In 2022, the 12-month change in inflation reached a 40-year high of 8.5% in March, peaked at 9.1% in June, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), and remained elevated over the rest of the year. S&P Global now estimates that the average CPI increased to 8.0% in 2022, up from 4.2% estimated in the previous forecast. Increased energy prices were the largest drivers of the high CPI readings, followed by rising prices for food. Core CPI (which excludes food and energy prices) increased 6.2% over the year, exceeding the January, 2022, estimate by 2.0 percentage points. The price of commodities, goods such as clothing and vehicles, increased 7.6%, while the price of non-energy services increased 5.6%.

Fueled by sanctions on Russian oil and gas, energy prices increased 25% over 2022, well exceeding the previous estimate of 2.2%. Oil prices rose to a monthly peak of $122.7 per barrel in June, then eased to $80.9 per barrel in December. According to BLS, average gas prices increased to record highs by March, 2022 ($4.31 per gallon for regular, unleaded gasoline), surpassing the previous high of $4.09 per gallon in July, 2008. Prices peaked at $5.06 per gallon in June, 2022, and ended the year at $3.36. However, the price of diesel fuel peaked at $5.76 per gallon in June, but remained elevated at $4.91 in December. Increased fuel prices, especially diesel, contribute to higher transportation costs, causing retailers to increase goods prices to offset higher costs.

Food prices increased 10% over 2022, 5.8 percentage points higher than estimated in January, 2022. The largest factors contributing to the rise in food prices were continued manufacturing and transportation disruptions that began during the pandemic, and the effects of the Russia-Ukraine war on energy and grain prices. All of this together has increased processing, transportation, and labor costs, which are considered when setting the retail price of food. In addition, weather effects such as heat and drought have reduced crop outputs in certain regions. The 2022 avian flu outbreak has affected over 57 million birds in the U.S. to date, making it the largest outbreak in U.S. history, and contributing to significant price increases for eggs, in particular.

Monetary policy tightened as the Federal Reserve raised the federal funds rate seven times in 2022 (compared to the three increases estimated in the January, 2022, forecast), attempting to restore price stability. The first increase (25 basis points) occurred in March, 2022, two months earlier than projected in the previous forecast. In total, the federal funds rate was increased by 425 basis points in 2022, to a range of 4.25% to 4.50% by December, 2022. In addition, the Federal Reserve began reducing its balance sheet in June, allowing up to $17.5 billion worth of agency debt and mortgage-backed securities and $30 billion worth of Treasurys it holds to mature each month without reinvesting the proceeds back into the marketplace. Beginning in September, these amounts increased to $35 billion of MBS and $60 billion of Treasurys per month.

In response to this monetary policy tightening, the 30-year, conventional, fixed mortgage rate increased more than anticipated in 2022, reaching an average of 6.6% in the fourth quarter (2.9 percentage points higher than estimated in January, 2022). Rising mortgage rates paired with high house prices contributed to a cooling of housing market conditions. Sales of new and existing homes, which were projected to remain flat at the time of the January, 2022, estimates, are now estimated to have declined 16.8% in 2022 compared to 2021. S&P Global indicates that single-family permits declined 7.1% in November, marking the ninth-straight month of declines, while multifamily permits fell 16.4%. Yet, the rise in house prices persisted through much of the year, only starting to decline in the fourth quarter. Annually, the average price of new and existing homes increased 16.5% and 6.2%, respectively.

The Federal Reserve has expressed its desire to achieve what it calls a "soft landing," in which its actions would successfully reduce inflation rates without causing a recession. However, as the year progressed and inflation remained persistently high, the Federal Reserve reiterated that its main goal was to return inflation to its long-run 2% target, even if that results in a recession. The combination of high inflation and monetary policy tightening had an impact on U.S. consumers' feelings of economic security. In June, 2022, the University of Michigan Consumer Sentiment index fell to 50.0 (down from 67.2 in January, 2022), its lowest level on record (since 1975). The stock market posted its worst first half since 1970, with the S&P 500 declining 20.6% through June 30. Consumer Sentiment recovered slightly to 59.7 by the end of the year, while the S&P 500 declined 19.4% in 2022.

The 2022 U.S. labor market could best be characterized as tight, with labor demand far exceeding labor supply. At its peak, there were 2.0 job openings per unemployed person (2.8 in Wisconsin). The unemployment rate fell below its pre-pandemic low to 3.5% in the third quarter, as predicted in January, 2022, and averaged 3.7% for the year. Nonfarm payrolls increased 4.1% for the year, exceeding January, 2022, expectations by 1.4 percentage points, and surpassing their pre-pandemic level in August, 2022. However, as of December, 2022, Wisconsin nonfarm payrolls were still 35,200 below their February, 2020, level. In order to recruit and retain workers in a tight labor market, employers offered pay increases to employees. As such, wage and salary disbursements increased 8.5% for the year (slightly higher than previously forecasted), with the largest gains occurring in the first half of 2022. However, personal income only increased 2.1% in 2022, as the 21.7% decline in federal transfer payments, such as stimulus checks and enhanced unemployment insurance benefits, offset much of the increase in other income sources. The U.S. labor force participation rate remained fairly stable, averaging 62.2% in 2022, while the Wisconsin labor force participation rate declined from 66.4% in January, 2022, to 64.7% in December, 2022.

Bolstered by inflation, nominal personal consumption expenditure (PCE) growth, while slowing from growth in 2021, remained robust through much of 2022. Nominal PCE grew 9.3% in 2022 (2.0 percentage points above the January, 2022, forecast), with the highest growth (11.5%) occurring in the first quarter. However, this growth came at the cost of personal savings. The savings rate (as a percentage of disposable income) declined from 11.9% in 2021 to 3.2% in 2022. The January, 2022, forecast projected modest growth (3.1%) in light vehicle sales in 2022. Instead, sales declined 8.3%, as ongoing supply chain issues continued to hamper recovery.

Several federal fiscal policies impacted the state in 2022. Wisconsin received its second payment from ARPA in May, 2022, which provided the state with $1.27 billion of discretionary funds to be spent in response to the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, funding from the IIJA, in conjunction with the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2022, provided funding to support major state investments in transportation and broadband, among others. On August 16, 2022, President Biden signed the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) into law. While S&P Global acknowledges that the IRA may encourage the use of renewable energy and limit increases in the cost of prescription drugs, it only estimates modest impacts of the Act on growth and inflation.

On August 24, 2022, the U.S. Department of Education announced that it was extending the suspension on federal student loan payments through December 31, 2022. The payment pause has been extended several times since the initial suspension on March 20, 2020. In addition, the Department of Education announced targeted student loan forgiveness of up to $10,000 (up to $20,000 for Pell Grant recipients) for qualifying individuals. However, several lawsuits were filed challenging the legality of the student loan forgiveness plan. In November, 2022, a federal court issued an injunction blocking the plan, which halted automatic forgiveness of certain student loans that were scheduled to begin on November 14. The Biden Administration requested that the Supreme Court of the United States issue a ruling on the matter. The Court announced in December that it would begin hearing the case in February, 2023, and would issue a final ruling by June, 2023. In response, the Administration extended the suspension on federal student loan payments until 60 days after: (a) the Court's ruling; or (b) June 30, 2023, whichever comes first. According to S&P Global, the proposed cancellation of student loan debt would only result in a modest increase in near-term GDP growth.

National Economic Forecast

Under the January, 2023, forecast, S&P Global predicts a mild recession will begin in quarter one of 2023, with recovery beginning in the third quarter of this year. The peak-to-trough decline in real GDP is estimated at -0.6%. Subsequently, the forecast projects minimal real GDP growth in 2023 (0.5%), followed by growth of 1.8% in 2024 and 2.0% in 2025. S&P Global projects that both the tight labor market and high inflation will begin to ease as the effects of the Federal Reserve's tightening of financial conditions take hold. The forecast predicts that a rebound in the personal savings rate will constrain consumer spending, resulting in modest growth through 2024.

The 2023 forecast is based on the following key assumptions. First, S&P Global assumes the Public Health Emergency is extended through mid-June, 2023, and anticipates that the transition of COVID-19 from pandemic to endemic will continue, as behavior adjusts to the risks of living with numerous variants of the virus. Second, the forecast incorporates all legislation enacted prior to December 29, 2022, and assumes real discretionary funding is extended at federal fiscal year 2022 levels. It does not yet reflect the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023 (CAA-23) or President Biden's plan to forgive a portion of student debt. Third, state and local governments do not experience a fiscal contraction, helped by strong revenues and federal financial support provided by federal pandemic relief monies and IIJA funding. Fourth, the Federal Reserve is expected to raise its policy rate to a range of 4.75% to 5.00% by March, 2023, and allow its balance sheet to decline by about one-third by 2024. Fifth, the forecast assumes that the current tariffs between the U.S. and China remain in effect. Sixth, growth in real, trade-weighted foreign GDP is expected to slow from 3.3% in 2022 to 1.4% in 2023, and foreign measures of inflation are expected to recede from 5.9% in 2022 to 2.3% by 2025. Meanwhile, foreign sovereign bond yields are expected to reach 2.7% in 2023 (up from 0.3% in 2020), as central banks tighten monetary policy in response to the recent surge in inflation. Seventh, the price of Brent crude oil is expected to ease from $101 in 2022 to $87 by 2024, despite sanctions on Russian exports and efforts of western countries to cap the price of Russian crude. Finally, S&P Global assumes that farm prices, which were elevated in 2022 due to the disruption of agricultural exports from Russia and Ukraine, will ease in 2023 as global harvests increase.

The 2023 forecast is summarized in Table 2, which reflects S&P Global's January, 2023, baseline outlook. Selected baseline projections are presented in more detail below, with alternative optimistic and pessimistic scenarios discussed thereafter.

TABLE 2

Summary of National Economic Indicators
S&P Global Baseline Forecast, January, 2023
($ in Billions)

	2022	2023	2024	2025
Nominal Gross Domestic Product	$25,457.4	$26,520.4	$27,595.5	$28,718.0
Percent Change	9.2%	4.2%	4.1%	4.1%
Real Gross Domestic Product	$20,010.2	$20,112.9	$20,465.6	$20,867.1
Percent Change	2.0%	0.5%	1.8%	2.0%
Consumer Prices (Percent Change)	8.0%	3.9%	2.2%	2.0%
Personal Income	$21,737.5	$22,677.0	$23,737.2	$24,858.3
Percent Change	2.1%	4.3%	4.7%	4.7%
Nominal Personal Consumption Expenditures	$17,375.8	$18,220.8	$18,839.2	$19,529.7
Percent Change	9.3%	4.9%	3.4%	3.7%
Economic Profits	$2,983.3	$2,926.5	$2,909.3	$2,910.8
Percent Change	7.7%	-1.9%	-0.6%	0.1%
Unemployment Rate	3.7%	4.6%	4.8%	4.5%
Total Nonfarm Payrolls (Millions)	152.0	153.1	152.8	153.5
Percent Change	4.1%	0.7%	-0.2%	0.5%
Light Vehicle Sales (Millions of Units)	13.70	14.79	15.88	16.29
Percent Change	-8.3%	7.9%	7.4%	2.6%
Sales of New and Existing Homes (Millions of Units)	5.739	4.220	4.596	5.113
Percent Change	-16.8%	-26.5%	8.9%	11.2%
Housing Starts (Millions of Units)	1.555	1.192	1.256	1.377
Percent Change	-3.1%	-23.4%	5.4%	9.7%

Consumer Prices. CPI increased by 8.0% in 2022, well above S&P Global's previous projection of 4.2%. In December, the 12-month percentage change in CPI was 6.5%, marking the sixth-straight month of deceleration that has been largely tied to declines in energy prices over the second half of 2022 (compared to the first half). Core CPI increased 6.2% in 2022, 2.0 percentage points above the January, 2022, forecast, and the 12-month change in December, 2022, was 5.7%.

S&P Global expects the average CPI to slow to 3.9% in 2023, 2.2% in 2024, and 2.0% in 2025, as energy prices decline 3.7% and 1.5% in 2023 and 2024, respectively, then increase 0.3% in 2025. In contrast to recent experience, core CPI is expected to exceed overall CPI in each of the next three years, growing 4.5%, 2.7%, and 2.4% in 2023, 2024, and 2025, respectively. The forecast predicts that core CPI growth will be driven by increases in the price of nonenergy services.

Employment. The national unemployment rate averaged 3.7% over 2022, similar to January, 2022, projections. The tightness that characterized the labor market in 2022 is expected to ease in 2023 in response to tightening monetary policy, leading the unemployment rate to increase to 4.6% in 2023 and 4.8% in 2024, then decline slightly to 4.5% in 2025. It is believed that payrolls have mostly recovered following the COVID-19 downturn in employment. S&P Global projects that payrolls will peak in the first quarter of 2023, before declining through the rest of the year. Overall, average annual nonfarm payrolls are expected to remain relatively flat through 2025, with annual percent changes of 0.7% in 2023, -0.2% in 2024, and 0.5% in 2025.

Personal Income. Personal income growth was slightly higher than expected (1.3% in the January, 2022, forecast) in 2022, at 2.1%. As anticipated, growth in wage and salary disbursements (8.5%) was offset by a decline in federal transfer payments (-21.7%). Real disposable income, on the other hand, declined 6.4% in 2022, due, in part, to high gasoline and food prices, but is projected to recover 2.7%, 3.7%, and 2.9% in 2023, 2024, and 2025, respectively, as prices decline. Going forward, personal income is forecast to grow 4.3% in 2023 and 4.7% in 2024 and 2025. S&P Global projects that wage and salary disbursements will grow at a similar pace of 4.9% in 2023, 4.3% in 2024, and 4.7% in 2025.

Real household net worth declined significantly in 2022 (-8.9%), driven by a decline in the value of equities (-23.2%). The forecast predicts that real household net worth will continue to decline 3.3% in 2023, as softer demand and higher mortgage rates put downward pressure on prices of existing homes, before beginning a slow recovery of 0.7% in 2024 and 1.5% in 2025.

Personal Consumption. Nominal PCE grew 9.3% in 2022, with growth in spending on services (9.8%) slightly outpacing spending on goods (8.2%). As a result, the shift from spending on goods to spending on services continued, with purchases of services making up 66.3% of all PCE in the fourth quarter of 2022.

S&P anticipates that nominal PCE growth will slow to 4.9% in 2023, 3.4% in 2024, and 3.7% in 2025, as inflation eases. The projected recession in early 2023, partly caused by higher financing rates and the projected rise in unemployment, is expected to result in slower consumer demand growth in 2023. As a result, real PCE growth is estimated to decline from 2.9% in 2022 to 1.5% in 2023, then remain below 2% through 2025.

Monetary Policy. As mentioned, the Federal Reserve increased the federal funds rate seven times in 2022. The most recent increase of 50 basis points in December marked a downshift in the size of rate hikes, following four consecutive 75 basis point increases. In addition, between June 15th and December 28th, 2022, the Federal Reserve reduced its balance sheet by $348 billion to approximately $8.1 trillion.

Going forward, two more Fed rate increases are expected in early February and mid-March, bringing the target federal funds range to between 4.75% and 5%. S&P Global anticipates that the rate will remain at this level until sufficient evidence is seen that inflation is on track to decline to 2.0% on a sustainable basis. As such, the forecast assumes that the first rate cut will occur in the second quarter of 2024. In response to these actions, it is estimated that the average commitment rate for a 30-year, conventional, fixed mortgage will increase from 5.4% in 2022 to 6.4% in 2023 (2.0 percentage points higher than the previous forecast for each year). The rate is then expected to ease to 5.7% in 2024 and 5.1% in 2025. The forecast also projects that the Federal Reserve will reduce its securities portfolio by another $1.0 trillion in both 2023 and 2024.

Housing. While housing starts declined in 2022 (-3.1%) compared to 2021, the decline was less drastic than S&P Global estimated in the January, 2022, forecast (-7.0%). S&P Global anticipates a much larger decline in housing starts of -23.4% in 2023, before recovering 5.4% in 2024 and 9.7% in 2025. Likewise, sales of new and existing homes are expected to continue declining in 2023 (-26.5%), partly in response to rising mortgage rates, then increase 8.9% and 11.2% in 2024 and 2025, respectively.

Growth in the price of new and existing houses in 2022 exceeded expectation from the January, 2022, estimate by 5.5 and 1.4 percentage points, respectively, although the volume of sales declined relative to prior expectations. Going forward, the forecast's predictions for housing prices are varied. The average price of existing houses is expected to decline 16.4% in 2023, then grow 0.8% in 2024 and 5.0% in 2025. Conversely, average new house prices are projected to continue increasing 5.9% in 2023, 2.8% in 2024, and 3.0% in 2025.

Business Investment. S&P Global estimates that nominal nonresidential fixed investment grew 10.5% in 2022, slightly higher than the January, 2022, estimate of 9.1%. Growth in 2022 was led by investment in intellectual property products (11.5%), followed by investment in equipment (11.1%), and structures (7.3%). However, real nonresidential fixed investment only grew 3.7% for the year, with growth in intellectual property products (8.7%) and equipment (4.8%) being partially offset by a decline in investment in structures (-8.0%). The forecast anticipates that growth in nominal nonresidential fixed investment will slow to 3.9% in 2023, 1.7% in 2024, and 2.3% in 2025.

Inventories increased by $151 billion in 2022, $8 billion more than estimated in the January, 2022, forecast. Going forward, S&P Global projects that inventories will increase by $9 billion in 2023, $64.9 billion in 2024, and $100.6 billion in 2025. The minimal increase in 2023 corresponds to the forecast's expectations that inventories will decline in quarters two and three of this year, which is consistent with the forecast of a mild recession during the first half of 2023.

International Trade. Nominal imports grew 16.4% in 2022, 8.4 percentage points more than previously forecasted, despite imports declining in the second half of the year (compared to the first half). Likewise, nominal exports were up 17.1% in 2022, exceeding prior estimates by 7.3 percentage points. Despite slightly higher percentage growth in exports, imports saw a larger increase than exports in dollar terms, increasing the trade deficit in 2022 and reducing real GDP growth by 0.47 percentage points. S&P Global predicts that growth in exports will slow to 1.6% in 2023 and 5.3% in 2024 and 2025, but continue to grow faster than imports over the forecast period. Nominal imports are projected to decline 1.1% in 2023, then recover 1.9% and 3.5% in 2024 and 2025, respectively. Given these assumptions, the U.S. nominal balance of trade is expected to improve each year, contributing 0.47, 0.24, and 0.01 percentage points to real GDP growth in 2023, 2024, and 2025, respectively.

Corporate Profits. Corporate before-tax book profits grew by 8.7% in 2022 (in contrast to a 2.4% decline projected in the January, 2022, forecast) and are forecast to decrease by 1.9% in 2023, then increase by 0.2% in 2024 and 1.7% in 2025. Economic profits, which are adjusted for inventory valuation and capital consumption at current cost (and are not affected by federal tax laws), increased 7.7% in 2022. S&P Global forecasts that economic profits will decline 1.9% and 0.6% in 2023 and 2024, respectively, then increase just 0.1% in 2025.

The 2023 forecast assumes that the effective federal corporate tax rate for all industries was 12.9% in 2022, will increase to 14.1% in 2023, and will decline to 13.3% in 2024 and 12.7% in 2025. Under current law, the 100% bonus depreciation provision enacted by the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 will phase out over the next five years, with the bonus depreciation percentage declining to 80% in 2023, 60% in 2024, and 40% in 2025. S&P Global predicts that this phase-out will increase the after-tax cost of capital, creating a mild headwind for investment spending in the coming years.

Fiscal Policy. The federal budget deficit is expected to decline from $1.375 trillion in federal fiscal year 2022 to $1.086 trillion in 2023, then grow to $1.380 trillion in 2024 and $1.586 trillion in 2025. S&P Global estimates that spending by the federal government detracted -0.19 percentage points from real GDP growth in 2022 (compared to -0.11 percentage points in the January, 2022, forecast), and will contribute 0.14 percentage points in 2023, 0.02 percentage points in 2024, and 0.03 percentage points in 2025. Spending by state and local governments is expected to have a larger impact, contributing 0.18, 0.12, and 0.10 percentage points to GDP growth in 2023, 2024, and 2025, respectively.

CAA-23 was signed by President Biden on December 29, 2022. The legislation authorizes $1.7 trillion of discretionary funding for agencies in federal fiscal year 2023, a 10% increase in funding relative to the prior year, with $849 billion appropriated for nondefense functions. CAA-23 also authorizes $84 billion of aid for Ukraine through federal fiscal year 2027, and $38 billion of funding through fiscal year 2032 to address natural disasters. CAA-23 is not yet included in S&P Global's forecast, and represents a modest upside risk to near-term GDP growth.

Alternative Scenarios. S&P Global's January, 2023, forecast also includes an optimistic scenario and a pessimistic scenario. Under the optimistic scenario, S&P Global assigns a 20% probability that productivity and growth of consumer spending will be stronger than assumed in the baseline forecast. It assumes that consumer and business response to the IIJA is more robust than in the baseline forecast, and a quicker resolution to the Russia-Ukraine conflict allows for lower energy prices, with the price of Brent crude oil staying $2 below the baseline through mid-2023. Lower energy prices and less risk aversion prompt a robust re-acceleration of consumer spending under the optimistic scenario, with annual growth in consumer spending at 2.4% in 2023 and 1.4% in 2024. In this scenario, real business fixed investment rises 1.7% in 2023, compared to 0.2% under the baseline, due to strong demand faced by businesses and elevated cashflows. Real GDP growth remains positive through 2023, compared to the baseline forecast's assumed two-quarter decline during the first half of the year, with growth of 1.4% in 2023 and 1.9% in 2024 under this scenario. Growth in core CPI remains higher than the baseline through mid-2024, at 3.7% in 2023 and 2.7% in 2024, compared to 2.6% and 2.4%, respectively, under the base forecast.

Under the pessimistic scenario, to which S&P Global assigns a 25% probability, the U.S. experiences a deeper recession with weaker consumer spending than assumed in the baseline forecast. This scenario assumes that the peak-to-trough decline in GDP will be -1.2%, compared to -0.6% in the baseline forecast, and projects that real GDP will decline 0.2% in 2023 and increase 1.2% in 2024. Real PCE declines in the first half of 2023, in contrast to a slight increase under the base forecast, with slower growth of 0.7% in both 2023 and 2024 (compared to 1.5% in 2023 and 1.2% in 2024 under the baseline forecast). In this scenario, it is assumed that the Russia-Ukraine conflict intensifies, leading to higher prices for energy commodities, other industrial commodities, and grains. The price of Brent crude oil rises to $112 per barrel by the second quarter of 2023 ($20 higher than the baseline), before moderating to $102 per barrel by early 2024 ($15 higher than the baseline). Delays in the production of consumer durable goods persist due to a slower correction of supply chain issues. This factor, in addition to weakening consumer demand, prompts businesses to scale back investment plans, with real business fixed investment declining 2.4% in 2023, 2.9% in 2024, and 0.4% in 2025. Core CPI remains above the baseline through 2023 (4.0%), then falls below the base forecast in 2024 (2.3%). Under the pessimistic scenario, the unemployment rate rises to 7.0% by early 2024.

General Fund Taxes

Table 3 shows general fund tax revenue estimates for 2022-23 and for each year of the 2023-25 biennium. Over the three-year period, these estimates are $94.2 million lower than the projections of the November 21, 2022, report. By year, the estimates are $60.7 million higher in 2022-23, $74.7 million lower in 2023-24, and $80.2 million lower in 2024-25. Over the three-year period, compared to the November 21 report, the estimates are higher for individual income taxes ($332.6 million) and vapor products ($4.8 million). All other general fund taxes are estimated to be lower, with the largest downward revision over the three-year period in sales and use taxes (-$238.8 million).

TABLE 3

Projected General Fund Tax Collections
($ in Millions)

	2021-23 Biennium		2023-25 Biennium	
	2021-22 Actual	2022-23 Estimated	2023-24 Estimated	2024-25 Estimated
Individual Income	$9,214.4	$9,610.0	$9,770.0	$10,300.0
General Sales and Use	6,978.3	7,480.0	7,600.0	7,780.0
Corporate Income/Franchise	2,960.0	2,910.0	2,850.0	2,970.0
Public Utility	383.6	391.0	372.0	377.0
Excise				
Cigarette	482.4	451.0	439.0	427.0
Tobacco Products	94.4	92.0	94.0	96.0
Vapor Products	4.1	5.6	6.2	6.8
Liquor and Wine	64.9	68.0	69.0	71.0
Beer	8.9	8.7	8.6	8.6
Insurance Company	221.8	230.0	237.0	245.0
Miscellaneous Taxes	135.6	107.0	96.0	110.0
Total	$20,548.4	$21,353.3	$21,541.8	$22,391.4
Change from Prior Year		$804.9	$188.5	$849.6
Percent Change		3.9%	0.9%	3.9%

Individual Income Tax. Total individual income tax collections were $9,214.4 million in 2021-22, a decline of 0.7% relative to the prior year, but 12.2% higher relative to the January, 2022, estimate. One reason collections were significantly above the forecasted amount that year is due to historically high levels of capital gains realizations in tax year 2021. Federal tax planning in response to proposed capital gains tax rate increases (which did not materialize) is believed to have driven capital gains realizations significantly higher during tax year 2021 than what would have otherwise occurred. Based on available data, it is estimated that total tax receipts related to long-term capital gains increased by over 35% in tax year 2021 relative to tax year 2020. Realizations in tax year 2022 are expected to be considerably lower than in 2021, owing in part to a weakened stock market in 2022 and the acceleration into 2021 of gains that would have otherwise been realized in 2022. A further decline in capital gains realizations relative to tax year 2021 is projected in tax year 2023, although realizations are anticipated to begin recovering in tax year 2024.

The impact of recently enacted state tax law changes, such as the child and dependent care expenses credit beginning in tax year 2022 and the increased amount of net capital losses that may be used annually to offset ordinary income from $500 to $3,000 (the same amount allowed under federal law) beginning in tax year 2023, are included in these estimates. The estimates also consider the state fiscal impact of all federal tax law changes automatically adopted to date.

Total individual income tax collections are estimated at $9,610 million in 2022-23, which represents a 4.3% increase in revenues over the prior fiscal year. Although this estimated growth is greater than the national personal income projection for 2022 of 2.1%, personal income includes both taxable components, such as wage and salary disbursements, and nontaxable components, such as employer contributions for employee fringe benefits and government transfer payments to individuals. The taxable components of personal income in 2022 are estimated to increase at a considerably higher rate (7.2%) than for personal income as a whole. This is largely due to the cessation in 2022 of various (non-taxable) federal transfer payments to individuals, such as stimulus checks and unemployment compensation, relative to 2021.

Based on preliminary collections information through December, 2022, individual income tax revenues for the current fiscal year are 12.9% lower than such revenues through the same period in 2021. This is primarily due to decreased withholding collections following the withholding table update that took effect January 1, 2022. However, individual income tax revenues are expected to increase at a rate of 21.1% over the next six months relative to the same period a year prior.

The primary factor for this estimated revenue increase is an expected decline in refunds paid to taxpayers in 2022-23 relative to 2021-22. The income tax rate reduction included in 2021 Act 58, which took effect beginning in tax year 2021, caused refunds to spike when taxpayers filed their corresponding income tax returns in 2021-22. However, because the income tax withholding tables were later updated beginning January 1, 2022, to reflect the rates, brackets, and standard deduction in effect for current law, the amounts withheld from taxpayers during tax year 2022 incorporated the Act 58 rate reduction for the first time. As a result, when taxpayers file the corresponding returns in Spring of 2023, their refund amounts will be lower (all else equal) than the refunds they would have received had the withholding tables not been updated.

Estimated individual income tax collections increase to $9,770 million in 2023-24 and to $10,300 million in 2024-25, representing annual growth of 1.7% and 5.4%, respectively. The annual growth rate is lower in 2023-24, and higher in 2024-25, than the projected growth in national personal income would suggest (4.3% in 2023 and 4.7% in 2024). One reason for this departure is the aforementioned assumption that capital gains realizations (which are generally not captured by personal income metrics) are estimated to decline further in tax year 2023, but then begin to increase in tax year 2024.

General Sales and Use Tax. State sales and use tax revenues totaled $6,978.3 million in 2021-22, and are estimated at $7,480 million in 2022-23. This estimate represents growth of 7.2% over the prior year, and growth of 5.2% for the remaining months of 2022-23. Sales tax collections through December, 2022, are 10.0% higher than the same period in 2021, however, much of this growth is attributable to inflation. Sales tax revenues in the next biennium are estimated at $7,600 million in 2023-24 and $7,780 million in 2024-25, reflecting growth of 1.6% and 2.4%, respectively. Over state fiscal years 2023, 2024, and 2025, S&P Global projects that consumer prices will increase 6.2%, 2.7%, and 1.9%, respectively. As such, the forecast estimates that real consumer spending (adjusting for inflation) will decline in 2023-24.

Corporate Income/Franchise Tax. Corporate income/franchise taxes were $2,960.0 million in 2021-22, which was 15.6% above the previous year and outpaced inflation. Corporate tax revenues are projected to be $2,910 million in 2022-23, $2,850 million in 2023-24, and $2,970 million in 2024-25, a decrease of 1.7% in 2022-23 and 2.1% in 2023-24, and an increase of 4.2% in

2024-25. The estimates reflect the anticipated decline in economic profits, as well as year-to-date corporate tax collections, which declined slightly (0.3%) compared to the same period through December of last year. The estimate also reflects the fiscal effects of law changes enacted to date, including provisions of federal tax law enacted to date that the state automatically adopts.

Forecasted corporate tax revenues are bolstered by anticipated pass-through entity (PTE) tax collections, which continue to grow. Tax-option (S) corporations and partnerships may elect, via persons holding more than 50% of the shares or capital and profits of a partnership, to be taxed at the entity level (reported under corporate tax collections) rather than generally requiring income to be passed through to their respective owners, members, or shareholders (reported under the individual income tax). Year to date, partnership PTE tax collections are $28.3 million more than the same period last year (an increase of 46.5%). Thus, state corporate tax collections are forecast to remain at relatively high levels notwithstanding the negative outlook for economic profits.

Public Utility Taxes. Revenues from public utility taxes totaled $383.6 million in 2021-22, and are estimated at $391 million in 2022-23, $372 million in 2023-24, and $377 million in 2024-25. Year-over-year, these amounts represent an increase of 1.9% in 2022-23, a decrease of 4.9% in 2023-24, and an increase of 1.3% in 2024-25.

The growth in 2022-23 is primarily attributable to an increase in the price of electricity and natural gas services in 2022, which has increased the revenues of gross revenues utilities providing such services (private and municipal light, heat, and power companies and electric cooperatives). Data reported by Wisconsin utilities through September 30, 2022, show year-over-year growth of 40.7% for natural gas sales and 8.3% for electricity sales. However, much of the growth in collections from these utility companies is offset by declines in collections from ad valorem utility taxpayers, resulting from anticipated declines in the statewide net property tax rate. The decline in collections in 2023-24 is due to a combination of slowing electricity sales, declining natural gas sales, and a continued decline in the statewide net property tax rate. Collections are expected to recover slightly in 2024-25 as prices and property tax rates moderate.

Further, estimated tax payments from telecommunications companies are anticipated to decline during each year as the exemption enacted under 2019 Act 128 for property providing broadband internet service in rural areas continues to phase in. The exemption is estimated to reduce collections by $12.1 million in 2022-23, $15.3 million in 2023-24, and $20.7 million in 2024-25.

Excise Taxes. General fund excise taxes are imposed on cigarettes, liquor (including wine and hard cider), other tobacco products, vapor products, and beer. In 2021-22, excise tax collections totaled $654.7 million, of which $482.4 million (73.7%) was from the excise tax on cigarettes. Total excise tax collections in 2021-22 represented a decrease of -3.4% from the prior fiscal year, primarily driven by a decrease in cigarette tax collections of -5.4% from the prior year. Excise tax revenues are estimated at $625.3 million in 2022-23, which represents decreased revenues of 4.5%. Excise tax revenues over the next biennium are estimated to decline by 1.4% to $616.8 million in 2023-24 and by 1.2% to $609.4 million in 2024-25. The estimates reflect the ongoing trend of declining cigarette consumption paired with only modest growth in other excise tax categories.

Insurance Premiums Taxes. Insurance premiums taxes were $221.8 million in 2021-22. Revenues are projected to increase to $230 million in 2022-23, $237 million in 2023-24, and $245 million in 2024-25. This is lower by $7.6 million in 2022-23, $15.9 million in 2023-24, and $22.8 million in 2024-25 compared to the November 21, 2022, report. The new estimates are based on growth in year-to-date insurance premiums tax collections (which reflect lower growth than anticipated in November) and historic collections growth trends.

Miscellaneous Taxes. Miscellaneous taxes include the real estate transfer fee, municipal and circuit court-related fees, and a small amount from the occupational tax on coal. Miscellaneous tax revenues were $135.6 million in 2021-22, of which 89.6% was generated from the real estate transfer fee. Based on the economic forecast for the housing sector, as well as collections through December, 2022, miscellaneous taxes are projected to decrease to $107 million in 2022-23, which represents a 21.1% decline from 2021-22 collections. This decline is largely attributable to a decline in sales of new and existing homes in 2022 and 2023. As a result, miscellaneous tax collections are projected to decline by another 10.3% in 2023-24, to $96 million, then increase 14.6% in 2024-25, to $110 million, as the housing market begins to recover.

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,

Bob Lang

Robert Wm. Lang
Director

RWL/lb
cc: Members, Wisconsin Legislature