

## e-FOOTNOTES

3rd Quarter

September 2011



### In This Issue

**Another GRA award**  
Region's educational challenges  
2012 County budget preview  
Milwaukee's revenue toolbox  
Region's property tax growth  
Latest People Speak Poll  
Milwaukee Police Chief Speaks to Forum Board

### President's Message

For many, the beginning of October is characterized by fall foliage, hooded sweatshirts, and the transition from baseball's interminable regular season to its riveting postseason. But for the Public Policy Forum, those October occurrences are trumped by an even more important one: review of local government budgets.



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### Upcoming Event...

**Viewpoint Luncheon:**  
*The role of our colleges and universities in building Milwaukee's future*  
Monday, October 24, 2011  
11:45 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.  
Crowne Plaza Milwaukee West  
10499 Innovation Drive,  
Wauwatosa  
Free Parking

PPF & CTSI members, \$40  
Non-members, \$50

[Click here for more details and to sign up](#)

### Additional details...

11:00 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.  
Poster session featuring CTSI sponsored research

### Upcoming Reports...

October - *Analysis of Milwaukee*

## Forum brings home another GRA award



For the third straight year, the Public Policy Forum was recognized by the national organization of government research professionals at the group's annual conference in Chicago in late July. The Forum received the Governmental Research Association (GRA) award for "Most Effective Education" on a local government issue for its January 2010 report entitled "[Should it Stay or Should it Go? Exploring the Potential for Structural Reform in Milwaukee County Government](#)". The 159-page report included analysis of the roots of Milwaukee County's financial distress; a detailed review of its mandated and discretionary activities and responsibilities; fiscal modeling of three restructuring scenarios; and analysis of Massachusetts' experience with eliminating county governments.

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## Annual public schools report illustrates region's educational challenges



The Forum's annual analysis of data on the region's public schools shows continued challenges with regard to standardized test scores, but signs of hope in other important indicators of academic achievement. "The region trails the rest of the state in several grade levels and subjects when it comes to proficiency on WKCE tests," says Forum Research Director Anneliese Dickman. "Perhaps even more alarming is that the gap widens at the higher grades, raising a red flag in the context of current efforts to drive educational reform toward college and career readiness."

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## Milwaukee County's budget challenges: From bad to worse

The Forum's 2012 Milwaukee County Budget Preview report - released in early August -

technology transfer  
October - *City of Milwaukee and Milwaukee County budget briefs*  
October - *Comparative Analysis of Racine Public Schools*

**New Members**  
Celebrate Children Foundation  
Kraly Solutions, LLC  
Stepaniak & Associates  
Transit Now  
Waste Management

#### Quick Links...

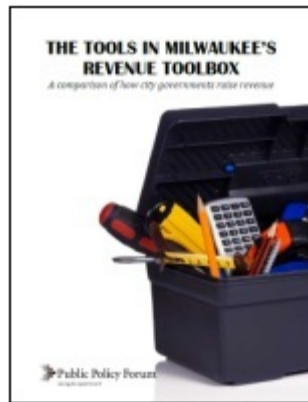
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found that the county's "overall fiscal outlook is even more alarming than in previous years" because of an intractable structural deficit that has not been appreciably reduced by recent state budget actions. "The county's longstanding fiscal problems show no signs of abating, and quite possibly have worsened," says Forum President Rob Henken. "Indeed, while the size of the 2012 cost-to-continue deficit and five-year structural gaps are similar to those experienced in previous years, some of the most promising options to address them now have been utilized, leaving few remaining strategies outside of deep service cuts and/or sharp revenue increases."

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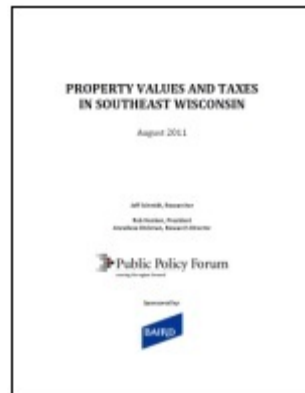
## City of Milwaukee's limited revenue options make it unique



The Forum delved into the revenue-raising practices of city governments in a new report released in mid-July: "The Tools in Milwaukee's Revenue Toolbox." The report - which was authored by the Forum's 2010-2011 Norman N. Gill Civic Engagement Fellow, Charles J. Szafir - follows a 2009 Forum report that assessed the fiscal health of the City of Milwaukee. That report found the city is over-reliant on state shared revenue, and handcuffed by rising fringe benefit costs for city employees and growing expenditure pressures associated with police and fire services.

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## Region sees smallest property tax levy increase in past decade



The Forum's annual analysis of property values and property taxes in the seven-county southeast Wisconsin region - released in mid-July - found that the amount of gross property taxes levied by local governments, school districts, technical colleges, special districts and other entities across the region increased by just 1.5% in 2011. That's the lowest year-to-year increase since at least 2000, and well below the 10-year average of 4.3%.

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## Latest *People Speak* reveals citizens largely satisfied with municipal services

The latest *People Speak* survey, conducted by the Forum in partnership with UWM's Center for Urban Initiatives and Research and The Business Journal Serving Greater Milwaukee,



finds that residents of southeast Wisconsin are mostly satisfied with the services they receive from their city, town, or village government. The poll, conducted in late June and early July, surveyed 391 adult residents of Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Washington, and Waukesha Counties.

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## Milwaukee Police Chief Ed Flynn speaks at Forum's quarterly trustees meeting



Milwaukee Police Chief Ed Flynn was the featured speaker at the September 16th quarterly Trustees Meeting. Chief Flynn spoke with the board about the changes in the department during his first term as police chief, as well as the accomplishments of the police department over that time. He also spoke about his feelings regarding some recent high profile incidents that occurred over the summer.

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We encourage you to "like" our [Facebook page](#) and "follow us" on Twitter [@PPFMilwaukee](#).

## Forum in the News

The Forum was frequently featured in different media outlets in the 3rd quarter of 2011.

[Click here for highlights.](#)

[Click here for a complete list.](#)

## Forum on the Streets

Forum staff were busy disseminating research and sharing their policy insights with government and civic entities in the 3rd quarter of 2011.

[Click here for highlights.](#)