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COLUMN: Voters don't like partisan pols

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Voters are not optimistic about their future this year. Once, many believed that our state or national government could find reasonable ways to provide whatever services they might want. Today, voters are uncomfortable about government spending and the lack of accountability to constituents. Incumbents ask voters to just trust them. Trust in government is at an all time low -- for good reasons.

While I was petitioning in Wausau to get my name on the ballot, more than one person declined to provide a signature, explaining that politicians "are a bunch of crooks." It doesn't help that politicians still are increasing, not decreasing, spending. A Rasmussen poll in July found that Americans are united: "united in the belief that our political system is broken, that politicians are corrupt, and that neither major political party has the answers."

Did you know that the Madison to Milwaukee high speed rail project is now becoming known for the high speed with which government transportation officials want to spend our money before a new Legislature takes office? (Perhaps the increase in independent and "third party" candidates urging common sense has bureaucrats worried.)

The Cato Institute notes that the size, scope and cost of the plan have increased. (Surprise!) Moving the Madison station from the airport to near the Capitol Square will be more expensive. State officials are accelerating spending on this project from \$50 million to more than \$300 million encumbered by the end of 2010.

Speaking of common sense, most upstate Wisconsinites have long been aware that there is something in the water of Madison that affects the people we trust to represent us at the Capitol. Why in the world would our representative support a new rail project between Madison and Milwaukee/Chicago when the government has no new money to spend? And of what value is such a rail system to us in north central Wisconsin? Are we being taken for a ride?

High speed rail might be nice for folks in the Madison metro area, even though driving to

Milwaukee is not a long or difficult trip. However, the new rail route basically is about the same one followed by the interstate highway, which taxpayers already have paid for. And there are private bus services along that same route that the new train would compete against.

Is this train for commuters? Why would any representative north of Portage support this boondoggle?

Cato predicts that this will be a white-elephant train with poor ridership, high operating costs, and just enough special-interest backing to keep it going.

The Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance attributes Wisconsin's perpetual problems to "a highly partisan, career Legislature, interest-group influence and a variety of legislative practices and election laws that favor incumbents and the major parties." Those major parties have all the advantages. We shall soon see whether the voters get fooled again.

"The government is like a baby's alimentary canal, with a happy appetite at one end and no responsibility at the other." -- Ronald Reagan

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