

Taxing the Taxman

This is a rare case of the taxpayer having the last laugh. While most people try to avoid paying taxes as best as they can, some Dutch firms have discovered they can earn more money by doing just the opposite. As the Dutch Treasury pays five percent interest on any excess amount paid that it returns later – more than what commercial banks would offer – some firms gladly accept an estimate that is too high. Dutch Finance Minister Gerrit Zalm bemoaned that '[i]f it turns out they need the money after all, they just submit a new estimate', adding that this kind of 'banking with the government' needed to stop as quickly as possible. Although the state now needs to borrow less, the 3.25 percent that it saves this way does not outweigh the five percent it has to pay out.



Minor Concerns

A beer label that shows an elf firing a slingshot at Santa's sleigh has Connecticut state officials concerned – not about Santa's rear end, but about underage drinking. The state believes the label on the British import 'Seriously Bad Elf' could entice minors to drink. State liquor regulations bar alcohol advertising with images that might appeal to children; Santa was specifically mentioned. The Massachusetts-based distributors, Shelton Brothers, has been notified that its application to sell the beer, a bitter winter ale brewed at the Ridgeway Brewery in England, has been rejected. Shelton Brothers has cried foul, citing the fact that the company had no such problems when it sold 'Bad Elf' and 'Very Bad Elf' in previous years. It sells the beer in 30 other states and none complained.



Striking Out On Her Own

A stay-at-home mom in Indiana, USA, has gone on strike – giving up her daily chores until her family gives her more help around the house. Regina Stevenson sat on a lawn chair on the sidewalk outside her home, with a sign saying 'Mom on Strike'. She has four children, ranging in age from seven to 19. The youngest three live at home with her and her husband, along with their daughter-in-law and grandson. She said she wants more help around the house and that she won't be cleaning, cooking or doing other chores until her family clean and learn to appreciate her. '[Stay-at-home moms] are not paid with money, and I think that you should show a little courtesy and respect for what we do,' she said.



A Lawyer's Christmas Greeting

And finally, Obiter wishes all readers a Merry Christmas, in what else but Legalese:

Please accept without obligation, express or implied, these best wishes for an environmentally safe, socially responsible, low stress, non addictive, and gender neutral celebration of the winter solstice holiday as practiced within the most enjoyable traditions of the religious persuasion of your choice (but with respect for the religious or secular persuasions and/or traditions of others, or for their choice not to practice religious or secular traditions at all) and further for a fiscally successful, personally fulfilling, and medically uncomplicated onset of the generally accepted calendar year (including, but not limited to, the Christian calendar, but not without due respect for the calendars of choice of other cultures). The preceding wishes are extended without regard to the race, creed, colour, age, physical ability, religious faith, choice of computer platform, or sexual preference of the wishee(s).