



Minnesota Journal

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A publication of the Citizens League

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Health-care choices reflect focus on preventive care

by Allan Baumgarten

This seems to be a relatively good time to be a primary care physician in Minnesota. Legislators, health plan companies and employer groups all seem to agree on the importance of primary care as the foundation for providing cost-effective, high quality health care.

Established plans, like Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, and emerging networks are emphasizing the role of primary care physicians and trying to recruit them. Legislators are hoping the new Integrated Service Networks authorized in the 1993 MinnesotaCare law will emphasize primary care and give providers and patients

incentives to use preventive care and regular exams.

New data reported to the Department of Health in July provide some interesting insights on how widely some screening practices are now used in the state. In addition, the state Department of Employee Relations has taken several important new steps to expand the use of primary care physicians in the plans that it operates for state employees, local governments and small businesses.

This is the fourth year the Citizens League is analyzing key trends and

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New role for government key to solving budget crisis

by Janet Dudrow

In politics, memories are short. Last fall headlines screamed the prospect of a state budget shortfall that might top \$1 billion. Then came a brief economic rebound that boosted revenues, and a legislative session fraught with distractions. Now the specter of financial doom is a hazy memory.

But a new Citizens League study report cautions that Minnesota's budget problems are far from over, and urges state and local leaders to confront not only the certainty of more fiscal troubles but the need to improve public services. The report, *Minnesota's Budget Problem: A Crisis of Quality, Cost and*

Fairness, was the work of a 20-member study committee that started work in July 1992. It was co-chaired by Ed Dirkswager and Jean King.

Minnesota continues to spend more than it takes in, Dirkswager said. Spending growth is outpacing revenue growth, and the gap will widen. Because the economy grew rapidly during the '70s and early '80s, governments were able to increase spending without taking a bigger share of income. But the economy will grow more slowly over the next 20 years, so "spend-

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Small schools take different approaches to facilities

Second of two articles. School districts around Minnesota are responding in different ways to facilities needs. Some groups of small rural districts—enticed by state grants—have built new joint high schools. Other small districts have repaired aging facilities and are trying to survive on their own. Still others are trying new ways of cooperating with other service agencies, organizations or units of government.

Cooperative secondary facilities
The Cooperative Secondary Facilities Grant program offers the most

direct state involvement in the traditionally local issue of school facilities. The program provides state grants to groups of at least three school districts to help build joint high schools, with the remaining funds coming from the local districts. None of the districts can have an enrollment of more than 1,200 students. But they can't be too small. The new facility must serve an average of at least 66 pupils per grade.

by Dana Schroeder

Five grants—ranging from \$6 million to \$8 million—have been offered through the program. (One grant—to Sibley East in the Arlington area—was withdrawn after local voters turned down the referendum for the local share of the costs.) In 1993 the Legislature set the maximum grant at \$5 million, with an additional \$1 million to be awarded if a significant number of service programs are located in the new building.

Although the program has a number of strong supporters and has increased curriculum offerings in the two new schools that are now operating, it is not without skeptics. Experience so far has raised questions about the amount of cost savings achieved, the location of the new schools, their governance, and the degree of service colocation at the new sites. (See accompanying story, page 7.)

"It's a popular program in the Legislature even though some of the

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Slower revenue growth meets faster service growth

In studying ways to bring Minnesota's spending and revenues into balance, the Citizens League has identified a key need to pay attention to long-term revenue growth and underlying economic growth. While this may be an obvious point, we need to act on this knowledge.

From the 1960s to the 1980s we had an unprecedented growth in our state's economy. Women joined the work force in large numbers, the "baby boomers" drove expansion, we faced relatively tame international competition, and we did not have to pay for dramatic increases in social programs, particularly long-term care.

This period of rapid growth, coupled with favorable demographics, permitted state government largely to fund additional services out of growth in revenues already in place. In fact, despite much rhetoric to the contrary, the overall take of state and local revenue has remained relatively stable at around 20 percent for more than 20 years.

But there are many signs that both sides of this budget equation have changed. The economic growth of the last several decades is unlikely to be repeated, given dramatically changed circumstances. Global competition is growing more and more intense. Projections call for sharply increased demands for services like long-term care in the coming decades.

Viewpoint

by Lyle Wray

Our state's economic growth is slowing, returning to longer term historical levels. Ninth Federal Reserve District economists, for example, predict Minnesota's employment will grow at 2.8 percent in 1993—our long-term, historical average—and slow down in 1994. Much of this growth, incidentally, has come in service jobs, many of which do not pay sufficient wages to support a family. In short, the medium-term perspective appears to be for a major budget squeeze with slower growth in revenues meeting faster growth in demand for services.

To respond to this squeeze, the Governor and legislators should address the underlying dynamics both of the expenditure and revenue sides of the budget equation:

Economic growth strategy. As a state, we need an informed and lively debate on how we can both grow the economy more rapidly and do so with greater participation of underrepresented populations. Which state budget activities help economic growth—whether in investments in infrastructure, human capital, environmental protection, technology transfer to small and medium-sized businesses or indirect investments in amenities such as parks that create a climate

for investment? Which activities hinder economic growth—whether a complex and unfriendly regulatory climate or certain types of tax policy? Do we need an "economic impact statement" in the Legislature on the likely impacts of specific proposals on savings and investment in the state?

We need to develop a clear game plan across public and private sectors for accelerating economic growth. Building on the work of the Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce and the Department of Trade and Economic Development's *Economic Blueprint* should be a good start. The Governor and legislative leaders should put economic growth with fairness on the front burner of the public policy debate.

Weigh public expenditures as investments. With such a game plan in place, we need to hold up public expenditures against it to see if they are contributing to our economic goals. Not all necessary expenditures may be justified in this way, but it should prove useful in the debate over an increasingly constrained budget. We need a lively debate, because advocates for almost any expenditure can lay some claim to assisting economic growth.

The real question is the relative value of specific investments in specific programs. Searching out truly effective investments, whether in physical infrastructure or human capital, will not be easy. But a task that should be a core element of the budget process in both the legislative and executive branches.

Growth and social programs. As a nation we are about two-thirds in opposition to broader income-transfer programs to deal with income disparities. So we need to address social problems of poverty and disadvantage with a greater emphasis on providing well-paying jobs to people now outside the economic mainstream. To do so, of course, requires that workers secure the necessary skills to justify higher wage rates.

We need new approaches to reaching out to people outside the economic mainstream to build a joint stake in the economic future of our state. In addition to assisting growth, such a strategy, if successful, might moderate the demand for additional services in the future.

The budget squeeze between slowing revenue growth and expanding demand for services poses a long-term challenge for the state. We need leadership on these issues in the coming months and years.

Lyle Wray is executive director of the Citizens League.

Editors decry violence, access to guns, domestic abuse

On Balance

"Man must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression and retaliation." —M.L. King, Jr.

Rochester Post-Bulletin expressed (Aug. 2) its concern "that violence has become more than a threat and that the random violence enabled by guns is no longer a big-city thing. Guns are too accessible to children. It is strange that a country so preoccupied with improving the health of its people is so incapable of dealing with the menace of guns which wound and kill so many." **Star-Tribune** said (July 26) "Kids need to be liberated both from their fear of guns and from the nonsense notion that guns are cool. But the campaign needs to be buttressed by stronger community and police efforts to get guns off the street and tougher laws to prevent them from coming back." **West Central Tribune** of Willmar said (July 29) domestic abuse cases are not handled well. "If society and the court system started to view domestic abuse cases as more serious crimes, perhaps it would be more effective at getting at the truth in each case and rendering more equitable decisions."

St. Paul Pioneer Press noted (July 28) the importance of a new commission to study regional government and the challenges it faces. Citing author Neil Peirce, "Great metropolitan regions... will fight the major economic battles of the 21st century. The Legislature and its new commission must help prepare the Twin Cities to compete in those global battles."

Red Wing Republican Eagle commended (July 27) Rep. Tim Penny for insisting that aid for flood victims be financed by spending cuts. "His courageous vote on flood aid

shows he's serious about reducing the deficit. It's a pity he can't get some serious support from the White House." **Mankato Free Press** also praised (July 28) Penny for his fiscal restraint and criticized Gov. Arne Carlson for not supplementing federal aid with state money. "The role of the states in disaster aid must increase." On the other hand, **Pioneer Press** said (July 20) that the work of disaster relief "has to be done with as much speed as Washington can muster and with clear-eyed understanding of impact."

Republican Eagle advised (Aug. 2) the Legislature "to stop the dual-track siting process and instruct the Metropolitan Airports Commission to concentrate on the most likely scenario: how to enlarge the present Twin Cities International Airport at its present site. It's the most logical solution... Relocating the airport essentially means uprooting one community and creating another." **Star Tribune** disagreed (Aug. 3), saying "Let the two-track airport planning process run its course. But let it also lead to a timely, and definitive, decision about how best to meet the Twin Cities's airport needs."

St. Cloud Times noted (Aug. 2) Minneapolis Mayor Don Fraser's

recent proposal to not provide welfare to unwed mothers and decried "an unfortunate tendency for many to lump all single mothers together... A majority probably aspire to join the many single moms who are working and providing a responsible, nurturing atmosphere for their children... (Welfare) reform should be based on the premise that what's needed is a system that no longer perpetuates policies that discourage independence."

Free Press suggested (Aug. 2) that former legislator Allen Quist's bid for governor is a "long shot" but "could spell big trouble for (Gov. Arne) Carlson... Quist's entry into the race increases the possibility of a deep split within the Independent-Republican party." Fergus Falls **Daily Journal** suggested (July 30) that a variety of candidates was good: "voters need a diversity of views, a healthy debate over the issues."

Pioneer Press criticized (July 16) a proposal to bring a casino to downtown St. Paul. "City leaders should lose this idea as fast as a sick gambler loses a paycheck." **Brainerd Daily Dispatch** pointed out (Aug. 2) that casino and pulltab gambling in the state have benefited local communities. "The detriments and

benefits of gambling may be debated for some time but there is no questions legalized gambling has had an incredible impact on our area." Fergus Falls **Daily Journal** cited (July 29) a recent study that suggested that "casino gambling neither hurts nor helps tourism... Gambling is in its infancy and... will grow and change rather rapidly over the next decade. Those changes will undoubtedly have an effect on tourism. Whether the effect is good or bad remains to be seen."

International Falls Daily Journal said (Aug. 2) bidding for city projects should be open to non-union contractors and criticized a restrictive opinion by Attorney General Hubert Humphrey III. "How do you guarantee you're getting the best deal before you've even compared prices?... Humphrey's defense of the union-only rule is driven more by politics than by a concern for what's best for local governments... Cost, quality work and efficiency are what government must consider when awarding bids. Whether or note they come with the union label shouldn't be a factor."

Duluth News-Tribune criticized (Aug. 3) the extent of lobbying by local governments. "Local taxpayers definitely need someone to watch out for them at state capitols. But that person shouldn't be a slick, high-priced lobbyist. It should be their elected state representative."

Single-payer health system: best care, cost control

Edited excerpts of remarks by Sen. Paul Wellstone (D-Minn.) to the Citizens League on July 9.

I think the system's in crisis. From that premise I think we are talking about fundamental change. I think it's change in terms of making sure health care's available to people, it's change in making sure we do something about cost containment, and it's change in making sure we figure out ways to deliver health care to people out in the communities in a humane and dignified way.

From those premises, I now move to a single-payer system. Single-payer system makes the most sense, because:

- (1) Our package of benefits is comprehensive. It's universal coverage.
- (2) There is consumer choice. I don't think the debate is about managed care vs. no managed care. I do think people need to have a choice and I don't see managed competition—these networks competing against one another—being all that applicable or relevant to a good many communities in our country.
- (3) We're very strong when it comes to delivery of care. I think it's right on the mark in terms of making sure that we begin to deliver care in underserved communities.

Finally, there is an almost irrefutable and irreducible evidence and logic

of cost containment that will take every state ultimately down the single payer path. There's not one shred of evidence that anywhere in the world there has been any real success in keeping costs down unless there is a public authority with some bargaining power vis-a-vis the providers. Managed competition in its purest form I call a great leap into the competitive unknown.

I think it will become an inescapable conclusion of good social and public policy that we will have to have annual caps, we will have to live within a global budget, and we will have to make sure that we get serious about keeping the costs down. But you can't do that by cutting into the delivery of services. We should

not have the administrative bloat that we have. We should not have the profiteering we have. The virtue, not the weakness, of our bill is we want to eliminate, to dramatically reduce the role of the insurance industry in health-care policy in the United States of America.

What I hear people in Washington saying now is, "It's not that single-payer doesn't have a chance. As a matter of fact probably the United States is going to go in that direction eventually, but politically we're not going to get there yet." That's a different kind of discussion than we once had.

There is one political vulnerability

The Minnesota Journal

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Wellstone

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in the single-payer bill. Yes, it will cost more in taxes, although people will pay far less in private dollars. I can recite study after study that talks about the savings we can make in a single-payer system.

Finally, we're getting a lot of support from providers.

We've crossed the philosophical divide. Now we're debating what kind of national health insurance. We're not debating whether or not it's a good thing.

Where is the baseline plan going to be set? If this is going to be financed in the main out of a payroll tax—I

think it should be a progressive income tax—the question becomes, financed at what level? We better make sure that baseline plan is set at a high enough level that the vast majority of people are in it. Otherwise we've got poor people's plans and old people's plans and sick people's plans and healthy people's plans and higher income people's plans. And then we've got a bureaucracy that's going to try to figure out what's happening in each of those plans.

I cannot see any possible way that the president will present a proposal based on the work of the task force that will not provide incentives for choice. There's no way politically you're going to be able to tell everybody, "Your employer's going to have a choice of plans." That's not

quite what people mean when they say they want choice of doctor.

There's going to be clear language that will enable any state that wants to go forward with single payer to go forward with single payer. I think some of the smaller states will right away. I think some other states are politically predisposed to do so. I think other states won't.

Correction

Part of the last sentence of the tagline to the article "Counties can promote innovation, coordination" in the June 15 *Journal* was inadvertently omitted. The sentence should have read, "Portions of this article appeared in the March 2, 1993, issue of the *AMC Update*."

Insufficient airport capacity carries economic costs

Edited excerpts of remarks by Rep. Jean Wagenius (DFL- Minneapolis) to the Citizens League on July 20.

The first question in determining whether to expand the existing airport or build a new one should be what is the cost and benefit over a reasonable amount of time. I think we can't say a reasonable amount of time is five or 10 years. It is just too expensive an undertaking. The time frame is more likely to be something in the order of the 30 years required in the dual-track process.

In doing the cost/benefit analysis, we need to be honest with ourselves about what the real costs are. They're just not the land and the concrete at either site. They're also the costs of mitigation at both of them.

Airlines cannot afford new airports, big expansions

Edited excerpts of remarks by Tim Griffin, senior vice president of marketing and planning and development, Northwest Airlines, to the Citizens League on July 13.

The airline industry lost \$10 billion in the last few years. Supply and demand are out of balance and slowly the marketplace is starting to force adjustments in behavior.

Some airlines have gone out of business. Aircraft orders are cancelled or delayed. People are expediting the retirement of aircraft. Very little growth in seats is going to occur over the next few years. We do think there will be some modest passenger growth. Passenger growth will exceed capacity growth. Load factors are going to rise, or the number of people per aircraft.

We see very little increased demand for airport gates. There are not going to be a lot more units flying. It's probably not a time now to be engaged in expansion projects to add capacity.

If my scenario is the one that plays out, what are the planning and policy implications?

Another key cost that no one has addressed yet, but will be done in the dual-track planning process, is that of safety. The airport fire trucks can get to any airplane within the first two critical minutes. After that, everyone agrees nothing can be done for people on an airplane.

If there is a crash on the north side of 62 or on the west side of Cedar, there is no way that an airport fire truck can get to the site within two minutes. Nor can city fire trucks. But the thing I really worry about the most is that we have an elementary school—Winona—that is immediately under one of the runways. And two elementary schools—Hale and Our Lady of Peace—are just a bit further off the end of the other one.

The sheer number of the cost at either site is enough for some to dismiss any plans for expansion. I find that really curious. We will spend approximately \$64 billion over the next 20 years on our highway program. I wonder why we have people opposed to spending \$4 to \$6 billion for an airport which gets us into the national, international economic communities, while we're perfectly willing to spend \$64 billion just to get around the state.

We do know what the downsides are to insufficient capacity and we need to take them seriously. We lost the Olympics. We have lost the opportunity to host overnight carriers because we have an intown airport. We have lost a nonstop flight from here to Tokyo that shifted to

Detroit. Northwest Airlines says it will reduce hub-bing here. They don't see enough room for both hubbing and the additional passengers our economy is generating. So, why aren't our state leaders just screaming about this loss of economic activity? This decision is the largest economic decision the state will ever make. John Brandl noted the dual-track planning process is the only strategic economic planning process we have in place. It is imperative that it be extremely well done, so our community can have a real opportunity to look at where we plan to go as a community and a state.

Another view

In his June 2 remarks to the Citizens League (Minnesota Journal, June 15), Sen. Durenberger sought to distinguish his position on health care reform from President Clinton's by saying he opposes "government regulation of prices for health-care services," opposes implementing universal coverage by 1996, and favors making individuals, not employers, buy health insurance. Judging from what Clinton has said, the Clinton and Durenberger policies are much closer than Durenberger lets on. Neither policy is acceptable.

Clinton will almost certainly endorse some form of managed competition, a theory that holds that competition among "accountable health plans" (aka HMOs) will reduce health-care inflation without rationing or damage to quality of care. Durenberger says he supports managed competition. Clinton has not yet committed himself to price controls. Durenberger, on the other hand, was the Senate leader in the 1989 campaign to impose fee controls on doctors who treat Medicare beneficiaries.

Durenberger says Clinton "wants universal coverage in place by 1996," while the senator is willing to let the uninsured and underinsured languish in that status for however long it takes "to bring down costs through market reform." Clinton's advisors have

discussed a 1996 target date, but Clinton has not committed himself to that date. It is reasonable to assume that Clinton will propose phasing in coverage over a six to eight-year period. A phase-in of that length is inevitable if the president refuses to endorse real cost containment, i.e., one payer with the authority to set limits on fees and hospital budgets.

If Clinton clings to the fantasy that managed competition will cut costs without harming access (a fantasy Durenberger shares) and if Clinton repudiates provider expenditure controls (which Durenberger is urging him to do), the position of the two men on cost containment will be indistinguishable. Since cost containment is essential to universal access, the position of the two men on the issue of when universal access will occur will also be identical—way off in the future.

Durenberger's proposal to make individuals buy insurance, not employers, differs little from Clinton's probable position favoring a payroll tax or an employer mandate. Most economists hold that payroll taxes or employer premium payments are passed on to workers or consumers. Payroll taxes, employer premium payments, and an individual mandate are all regressive methods of financing health care. Income taxes would be much more

Kip Sullivan, Research Director, Minnesota COACT

Health

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issues in Minnesota's health-care marketplace. The League will release Minnesota Managed Care Review 1993 at a special meeting September 10, described in this month's Citizens League Matters.

Officials at the Department of Health and other state agencies worked with HMO representatives for several years to improve the quality and usefulness of the utilization data reported by the HMOs in their annual statements. This group concluded that comparability of key selected measures of ambulatory care utilization was a more important and more attainable goal than completeness—trying to capture every ambulatory encounter. This is the first year the new reporting standards were fully implemented. Thus, the data on chemical dependency and mental health treatment are based on the number of members receiving some service and not visits or other measures of service units.

The 1992 reports include three focused measures of care: cholesterol testing for all enrollees; pap smears for females age 10 and older and mammograms for women age 50 and over. Pap smears are recommended as part of an annual exam, and an annual mammogram is recommended for women 50 and over.

The new data show that about 52 percent of women age 50 and older enrolled in HMO commercial plans (excluding Medicare and public assistance), had mammograms during 1992. Three small HMOs—First Plan, Group Health of Central Minnesota and Metropolitan—reported the highest rates. Of the large HMOs, MedCenters and Medica Choice reported rates of 54.5 percent and 51.2 percent, respectively. These rates are very similar to those in a 1992 Department of Health statewide survey, in which 55 percent of women in the same age group reported they had a mammogram in the past year.

About 62 percent of women between age 25 and 34 in HMO commercial plans had pap smears, compared to 81 percent of women in that age group in the general population, as reported in the state survey. (Department of Health officials caution that the survey data

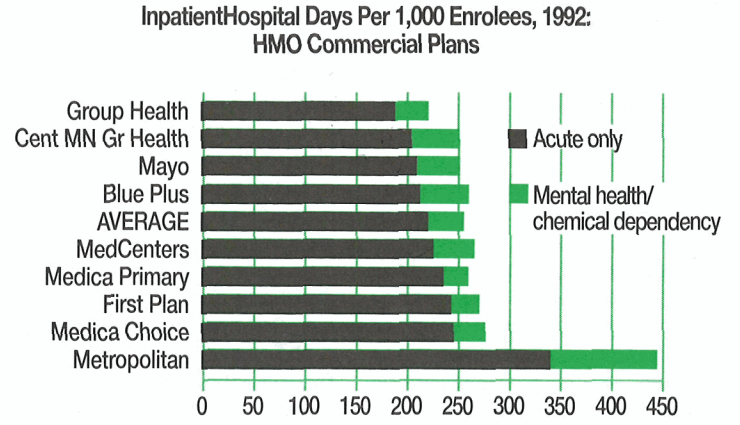
are self-reported and not independently verified.) However, women in Medical Assistance HMO plans in that age bracket had a lower rate—about 41 percent.

Inpatient hospital care is a key component of health-care costs. Minnesota HMOs spent more than \$390 million last year on nearly a quarter of a million days of inpatient hospital care for their enrollees. On average, HMO enrollees in commercial plans used inpatient hospital care at the rate of 254 days per 1,000 enrollees. About 13.8 percent of those days were for inpatient care for mental health or chemical dependency.

As shown in the figure, Group Health's enrollees used inpatient care at the lowest rate: 218 days per 1,000 enrollees. Group Health employs staff doctors and also contracts with some medical clinics. Of the other large HMOs, Medica Primary (which contracts with group practices) reported the next lowest rate of inpatient utilization: 261 days per 1,000 enrollees. Metropolitan had by far the highest rate at 440 days per 1,000 enrollees. Next highest was Medica Choice at 274 days per 1,000 enrollees.

Inpatient hospital utilization was generally higher for enrollees in public assistance plans. General Assistance recipients average about 1,000 days per 1,000 enrollees, almost one-third of which was for mental health and chemical dependency treatment. Group Health's two small Medical Assistance plans had the lowest rates of inpatient hospital use. Medica Choice, which operates the largest public assistance HMO plan in the state, reported a reduction of 10 percent in inpatient hospital use in 1992 to 477 days per 1,000 enrollees.

State employees health plans Beginning in 1994, all six health plans covering state employees and their dependents will use some form of primary care physician or "gatekeeper" arrangement, in which use of specialists is somewhat limited. That change is partly reflected in the new premium rates released earlier this month by the Minnesota Department of Employee Relations. Two plans will begin using a primary care physician arrangement in 1994: the State Health Plan, a self-funded preferred provider arrangement administered by Blue Cross



Source: Minnesota Managed Care Review 1993

and Blue Shield of Minnesota and Medica's new Medica Premier plan.

The increases for several of the state's offerings are remarkably low—the State Health Plan is reporting a one percent increase, and Medica Primary is setting its premium less than half a percent higher than in 1983. After years of significant premium increases and declining enrollment, Medica and the state agreed to replace the open-network Choice plan with the new Premier plan, a primary care physician arrangement. Increases were higher for Group Health (7.3 percent) and MedCenters (11.4 percent).

Group Health remains the low-cost provider in the Twin Cities area and benefits from the state's practice of steering employees to the least expensive plan. However, Medica Primary is now only seven dollars a month higher.

The state is also managing health benefit plans for local governments and a new plan, beginning July 1, for small businesses. The state selected four carriers: Medica (Premier network), Blue Cross and Blue Shield (Blue Plus network), Fortis (Preferred One network) and Health Partners (Group Health network, for the small business plan only) and is working with insurance brokers to market the plans. All of the plans use some form of primary care physician arrangement.

The state is also introducing some potent new competition for dental plans. Prudential's Dental Maintenance Organization plan will be offered for the first time, and the premiums are much less than for the established Delta Dental and Group Health plans. Prudential is

charging \$40.59 per month for family coverage, compared to \$64.80 for Delta. The state pays half the cost of dental coverage and hasn't applied its low-cost carrier pricing to dental coverage. Nonetheless, state officials are watching to see whether state employees respond to the price difference.

Among large employers, state government provides some of the best comparative information on plan choices to employees at open enrollment time. This year's materials will include the results of a new employee satisfaction survey, measuring how state employees assess their health plans on measures of access to and quality of care and customer services. While state governments elsewhere are using Minnesota's experience to conduct their own surveys, there is a key difference: only in Minnesota are the names of the plans reported with the results. In Michigan, for example, a state employee only gets to see the ratings for Plans A, B and C.

The current focus on primary or preventive care is reflected in choices made in several sectors, including health plans, public and private employers and the Legislature. The data now available provide a limited picture of the extent to which HMO enrollees are availing themselves of the services offered through their plans. They also raise important questions about access, incentives to seek care and communications between plan, provider and patient.

Allan Baumgarten is associate director of the Citizens League and author of Minnesota Managed Care Review 1993.

Budget

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ing increases will take a bigger bite,” Dirkswager said.

Committee member Peter Hutchinson said that people whose own budgets are cramped in the tighter economy are not likely to be sold on major tax increases to solve government’s budget problem. “People have become skeptical about whether government can actually deliver on its promises,” he said. “They know that more spending hasn’t produced better results.”

Economic pressures and voter skepticism will force state and local governments to do more with less—or at least, more without more—for the foreseeable future. That will require more than tinkering with budget cuts or innovations in management, according to King. She said that government must attack its fundamental flaws if productivity is to improve.

“How can you possibly have a successful institution when the people in it are rewarded whether or not the mission is accomplished?” asked Ted Kolderie, another committee member. Kolderie said “in education, for example, within broad limits, nothing in the district’s rewards depends on whether students learn.” Government’s preferred method of delivery is through an indefinitely-renewable contract with one in-house supplier—in other words, a monopoly.

The report calls for a new view of the role of government. “The old view was that government was about regulating behavior and dishing out money,” said John Brandl, committee member and Citizens League president. “Government should be about designing environments where people and institutions are systematically oriented to serve the common good while they also meet their own interests.”

The League said government should use five principles when designing such environments:

- 1. **Target public subsidies directly to people who are financially needy.**
- 2. **Use competition.** Only when consumers have choices are they able to make suppliers respond to their preferences. Government can

create citizen markets, giving customers tax dollars to buy their own public services from an array of public and private suppliers. Government can also give itself more choices, by splitting its role as policymaker from its role as operator, then choosing from competing service providers.

3. **Allow prices of public services to reflect true costs, including the social cost of individual decisions.** Current policies often disguise the true cost of public services, and distort citizens’ choices about how to spend their money.

4. **Meet more public responsibilities through public-spirited citizens.** Government should work with families, ethnic groups and neighborhoods to achieve its public goals, and not rely only on professionalized “services.”

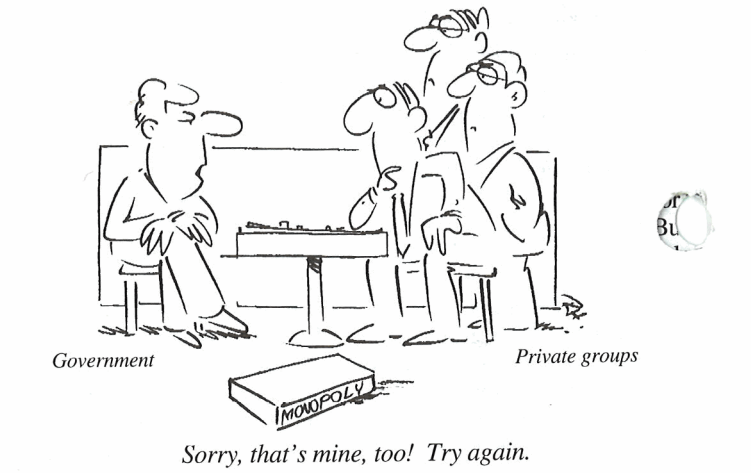
5. **Make long-term economic growth one of the objectives of state spending.** Policymakers should make sure that expenditures on infrastructure, research and education are met with results that are rigorously and impartially evaluated.

Applying these design principles to the four largest areas of state and local spending would spur greater productivity.

● The report urges lawmakers to strengthen Minnesota’s existing citizen market for **elementary and secondary education**. Allowing school aid to follow each student to his or her school or program would make consumers more powerful; now, aid dollars are paid to districts, who may allocate the funds internally however they wish. “Imagine what would happen if parents had some control over the \$180,000 or so of aid dollars in their child’s classroom,” Hutchinson said.

And choices should be expanded, the League said. Sen. Ember Reichgott’s successful 1993 bill to raise the limit on the number of charter schools from eight to 20 was an important accomplishment, Kolderie said. The report said the 1994 Legislature should remove the limit on charters, and should allow schools to be chartered by either a local school board or the state board of education.

The state should also give more choice to school boards, the League



said. Split the boards’ policy responsibility from their responsibility to operate the schools. Then let teachers and others form teaching-and-learning programs—programs they own and operate—and let boards choose the best ones to serve their districts. Kolderie said this arrangement would make choice a reality for smaller districts that can’t support a variety of different schools.

● The League said the current system of financing **higher education**, which relies heavily on across-the-board tuition write-downs, is inequitable and expensive. It called for the state to reduce the portion of higher education aid provided in the form of appropriations to institutions and increase the proportion provided directly to financially needy students, a policy proposed by Gov. Arne Carlson in 1993. “This approach recognizes that higher education is a public good by subsidizing all students, but it makes college more affordable to low-income students by focusing a greater share of public aid on those who need it most,” said committee member Becky Malkerson.

● Committee member Lyall Schwarzkopf said the state’s **property-tax relief system** illustrates what happens when the “prices” of public services don’t reflect their real cost. General-purpose grants to cities in effect write down all residents’ property taxes, making the services appear cheaper than they really are. “The subsidies insulate city officials and taxpayers from their spending decisions, so they may be less inclined to be frugal,” Schwarzkopf said. To give them a stake in their spending choices, the state should decrease the share of general-purpose aid to cities and increase the

share that is paid directly to needy taxpayers, the report said.

● Minnesota relies much more than most states on **nursing homes** to care for its elderly citizens, and that’s driving the rapid escalation in state health care costs. The League urged the Legislature to support and expand alternatives that enable seniors to stay in their communities with the help of families, neighborhoods and voluntary associations.

Medicaid, Medicare and other dollars should be pooled into flexible funds, with recipients using their allotment to choose their own long-term-care plan. Each plan would provide a full menu of services, from home-delivered meals to hospital care. Regional purchasing agents such as counties would choose which plans to offer from among competing alternatives and would pay for services on a capitated basis. In such a system, providers would face financial incentives to help people remain as independent as possible, according to committee member Tom Swain, who also chairs the Minnesota Health Care Commission.

Co-chair King said that Minnesota’s competitive advantage depends on offering quality public services, at affordable cost to taxpayers, in an equitable manner. “We won’t maintain our advantage by nibbling down service and inching up taxes,” she said. “We need real reform.”

Janet Dudrow, a research associate at the Citizens League, staffed the study committee on Minnesota’s budget. Copies of the report of Quality, Cost and Fairness will be available in early September. Call the League office at 338-0791.

Facilities

Continued from page 1

first schools have done some stumbling,” said Rep. Becky Kelso (R-Shakopee). “It’s an option I want to have available to local school districts, but it’s not an answer for large numbers of them.”

Shared facilities

Other small, rural schools are taking a different route to solving facilities needs: maintaining a small school, but sharing space with other agencies and organizations and units of government.

Rollingstone. Rollingstone, a community of 697 located in the Winona school district, is home to an aging K through five elementary school with an enrollment of 110 students. According to Arnold Duf-

seth, business manager for the Winona school district, “We’re operating on the good graces of the state fire marshal.”

But the community wants to keep an elementary school and is exploring having the city of Rollingstone build a new \$2 million building to house both city offices and a school. The school district would lease space in the building on a long-term basis. The school board has appointed a committee to begin negotiations with the city of Rollingstone.

Nett Lake. The Nett Lake school district in extreme northern Minnesota will receive \$5 million in state funds this year and \$2.9 million next year to construct a new building to house an elementary school, a combination school/community public library, and a number of social service agencies.

Cooperative secondary facilities grants

Lac qui Parle Valley. Four districts in western Minnesota—Appleton, Madison, Marietta/Nausau, and Milan—were the first group to receive a cooperative facilities grant, for \$8 million. (Marietta/Nausau and Madison consolidated as of July 1.) The new Lac qui Parle Valley High School opened in the fall of 1990, at a cost of \$12.25 million.

The school is located in the country, eight miles from the closest of the four towns and 20 miles from the farthest. Designed for 800 students in grades seven through 12, it enrolled about 730 students in 1992-93. (There were 770 students in grades K through six.)

Lac qui Parle Superintendent Marlowe Halbur said Madison and Appleton used to offer 55 courses to juniors and seniors, compared to 100 courses offered when the new school opened.

A forthcoming report on the Cooperative Secondary Facilities program by Minnesota House Research notes “significant” start-up costs for Lac qui Parle Valley School, including severance pay for laid-off teachers and administrators, raising teacher salaries to the level of the highest-paid district, and providing water and sewer services to the remote school site. The report says since a primary goal of all the districts was to upgrade the secondary curriculum, “expanding the curriculum, not saving money, was the end result.”

The report notes that the districts’ decision to continue operating three separate ele-

mentary schools reduces physical plant savings and operating efficiencies and creates “a situation where to a degree, the individual school boards become advocates for their elementary program and there is no strong advocate for the high school.”

According to the report, all four districts are now under financial strain. All had negative fund balances at the end of 1990-91, and Appleton is currently in statutory operating debt, a situation where a district’s expenditures exceed its budget limitations by more than 2.5 percent.

Minnewaska Area. Three districts in west-central Minnesota—Glenwood, Starbuck, and Villard—received a \$6 million cooperative secondary facilities grant to build the new \$16.5 million Minnewaska Area High School, which opened in the fall of 1991.

Like Lac qui Parle, the Minnewaska school is located in the country—four miles from both Glenwood and Starbuck—and the districts continue to operate an elementary school in each of the three towns. However, all three Minnewaska districts consolidated as of July 1. There are 800 students in grades seven through 12 at the new facility and 1,020 students in grades K through six.

According to Minnewaska Superintendent Dan Froemming, the new school has brought expanded course offerings and offers a swimming pool, a 534-seat auditorium, a media center, and better facilities for vocational and computer courses.

The funds came through a program in which the state sells building bonds for school districts with weak tax bases. The state pays off the bonds, unless the district’s tax base increases.

Nett Lake, located on the 400-resident Bois Forte Indian Reservation, has 70 students in grades K through six. The 45 students in grades seven through 12 are tuitioned to the St. Louis County school district. The existing elementary school, according to Nett Lake Superintendent Ray Toutloff, was poorly constructed and has deteriorated.

Plans call for the new school to open in the fall of 1994. The building will house services for families and children, chemical dependency, mental health, and victims. It will also include a youth activities center, community education, early

childhood and family education, tribal education, a satellite police station, and a special archives to preserve the history and culture of the Bois Forte Band of Chippewa Indians.

It’s clear that decisions on school facilities and on structuring the delivery of educational programs—and, sometimes, social services—are closely intertwined. The question for many Minnesota districts appears to be which set of decisions should be driving the other. As newly elected Elbow Lake-Wendell board member Carolyn Schei said, “I want the good curriculum and the teachers. I don’t care what building it’s in.”

Dana Schroeder is editor of the Minnesota Journal.

Helmstetter said the new facility will not result in any significant new course offerings, but will alleviate crowding. Although the cooperative facilities program now emphasizes colocation of services, no service agencies will actually be located in the new school, he said. There will be space available for social workers, public health nurses and law enforcement officers who visit the school to confer with students and staff. “The human services and court services people don’t need additional space,” Helmstetter said. “The new building primarily alleviates our problem.”

Grant County. Four other districts in west-central Minnesota—Elbow Lake-Wendell, Barrett, Hoffman, and Kensington—received a \$6 million grant from the 1993 Legislature to build a new \$9.9 million to \$12.25 million secondary facility in Barrett. A local bond referendum is set for October and will offer voters various building options with different price tags. The building is planned for 500 seventh through 12th graders and will open in the fall of 1995, if the referendum passes.

K through 12 enrollment for 1993-94 is projected at 1,001. The districts are now in a cooperation and combination agreement and will vote on consolidation in about a year.

Plans for the new building are not without controversy. Building opponents—two of them write-in candidates—won all three seats up for election on the Elbow Lake-Wendell school board in May, unseating two incumbents in a high-turnout election.

Minneapolis reverse commute bus ridership growing

Reverse commuting—traveling from downtown to the suburbs to work—is catching on in the Twin Cities. Southwest Metro, the joint-powers transit company Eden Prairie, Chaska and Chanhassen formed when they “opted out” of the MTC in 1986, reports dramatic ridership increases on its #53R and F routes between downtown Minneapolis and work sites in its service area. In 1986, reverse commuters accounted for about 50,000 trips. Reverse commute trips this year were up 33 percent over last, and by 1994 are expected to reach 500,000.

Loring-Nicollet Bethlehem Community Center in south Minneapolis spurred the effort to remove transportation barriers for low-income neighborhood residents struggling to find jobs. The Eden Prairie Chamber of Commerce and leaders from local businesses—including MTS, Rosemount, Inc., and the Eden Prairie Center—worked with the Southwest Metro board to design the new service.

Express buses leave from fixed stops in Minneapolis, then connect at suburban points with Dial-A-Ride vans to work sites in time for first-, second- and third-shift start times. Riders must call a day in advance. Diane Haberts, Southwest Metro’s director, said “It’s not a ‘regular’ schedule—we’re customer driven.”

Loring-Nicollet works closely with new employees and companies to ease the culture shock that may arise for city workers unaccustomed to suburban firms and for suburban companies unaccustomed to much diversity in their work forces.—*Janet Dudrow.*

The Star Tribune carried two separate, but closely related, articles on two separate pages the other day. One reported that Minneapolis city government faces \$3.5 million in red ink this year because of unexpected expenses and a reduced property-tax take. The second detailed difficulties with the Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP).

NRP gets \$20 million every year in dedicated city money, half of it from surplus taxes paid by commercial property in tax-increment (TIF) districts. When the city borrowed money to help finance redevelopment in those TIF districts, the idea

Take Note

Forward-looking items to keep you from thinking in reverse.

was that the new development would produce higher property taxes, which the city would retain—the county and school district would not get their shares. The deal was that this increased tax take (the “increment”) would retire what the city had borrowed, Minneapolis would have a stronger property-tax base to finance its usual operations, and the new development would then go back on regular tax rolls.

But when TIF districts produced more income than necessary to make the annual debt repayment, the City Council did not use the additional “increment” either to retire the debt faster or to reduce the overall city property-tax rate. Instead, it treated the money as a windfall and spent it outside regular budgeted operations. Further the city extended repayment schedules, thus retaining the entire property-tax take for an even longer period. Then, under severe legislative criticism for these actions, the mayor and council dedicated \$10 million a year of TIF “increment” for 20 years to neighborhoods under the NRP.

Now, falling commercial property values mean the city must increase property-tax rates by 10 percent next year just to break even. With times tougher, will the new mayor and council really want to raise property taxes significantly in order to continue dedicating \$20 million annually to NRP?—*Pete Vanderpoel.*

Charter schools are the topic of a new study now underway by Minnesota House Research staffers. The study will look at the operations of the schools, whether they’re meeting expectations, their governance structures, why parents chose to enroll their students in the schools, and what led to some charter proposals being approved and others denied. The report will be presented to the Legislature during its 1994 session.—*Dana Schroeder.*

The Metropolitan Council recently published some fresh facts for people who like to compare the Twin Cities with other large metropolitan areas. Out of the 25 areas, the Twin Cities ranked first in percentage of people with high school

diplomas, second in percentage of people in the labor force, sixth in percentage of people with a bachelor’s degree or more and sixth in household income. It also had the 23rd lowest poverty rate and 24th lowest unemployment rate.

However, it was fifth in the percentage of poor families that are headed by women and 20th in income earned per worker.

The Council’s newsletter also pointed out that the amount of affordable rental housing (rent up to 30 percent of income) in the Twin Cities decreased two percent between 1980 and 1990, while the number of households with incomes below \$10,000 grew 45 percent.

A study done by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in the late 1980s looked at low-income, unassisted renters—those receiving no federal help through public housing or Section 8 vouchers. The study found that 57 percent of these renters in Minneapolis and 51 percent in Minneapolis suburbs faced one or more of the following housing barriers: high cost (rent over 50 percent of income), inadequate size, unsafe, or being displaced. Of these households facing barriers, 75 percent in Minneapolis and 93 percent in the suburbs faced high cost as the *only* barrier.

HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros has said he will try to move subsidized housing out of the central cities and into white suburbs and reverse decades of federal housing policy

that has not just tolerated, but promoted racial segregation. All these pieces fit into an area the League will study this summer and fall, housing and metropolitan development.—*Marilou Fallis.*

A task force of the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) is developing an action plan that could essentially redefine what Minnesota counties do. The AMC is hoping the 1994 Legislature will consider issues fundamental to counties’ existence: Should they continue providing the services they now provide or should some other level of government take on certain of these responsibilities? And who should pay for them?

A task force of 13 county commissioners is looking at how county services can be provided most effectively, efficiently and flexibly. It is asking practical questions: Why are there multiple systems for assessing property? Why are counties in the library business? Why aren’t counties responsible for inoculating all children?

It is also examining structural questions: How can human services be reorganized to allow better delivery of services? Should the state grant counties general powers without lodging specific responsibility in a particular office like the county auditor or the county assessor? The effort ties into interest by the Governor and some legislators in redesigning the delivery of services.—*Jody A. Hauer.*

Contributors this month include Minnesota Journal and Citizens League staff members; Jody A. Hauer, State Auditor’s Office; and Pete Vanderpoel, former Citizens League communications director.

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Citizens League
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Citizens League Matters

August 17, 1993

News for Citizens League Members

Welcome new members

Martin Alpert, David J. Bennett, H. Thomas Blum, Ann Bourque, Jacqueline Byrd, Joyce Champlin, Fran Davis, Bob Ebert, Adam C. Ehlert, Stuart P. Evensen, Roberta Freese, Chuck Grimsrud and Eunice Groschen.

Ann Lanoue, Chris Longley, Walter Lorshbough, Gene Muchow, David Nelson, Daniel Ostlund, Cherie Perlmutter, Kent and Ann Peterson, Jane Prohaska, Thomas A. Quinn, Mark Ritchie, Milton H. Seifert, Jr., Kimberly Simmons, Milton Smith, John E. Thomas, Tsippi Wray.

Welcome back

Betty Bednarczyk, William P. Donohue, Carol Ericson, Claudia Kelley, Thomas Kelly, Sharon G. Klumpp, Peter Lancaster, Ann Markman, Rosemary McGlynn, R. T. Rybak, Oscar Sorlie, Pam Staples.

Thanks to recruiters

Win Borden, Norma Lorshbough and Ed Oliver.

The McKnight Foundation will match new member dues in 1993. Help the League by recruiting a new member this month.

New board members take office

Kent Eklund elected president for 1993-94

Kent Eklund became the 41st president of the Citizens League last week. Eklund, League vice-president this past year, took office at the August meeting of the Board of Directors.



Kent Eklund is 1993-94 president of the Citizens League.

Eklund is a St. Paul resident and President of Cincinnatus, a management consulting firm. He served on the League's Board of Directors from 1984 to 1988 and returned in 1990. He chaired the League's first study of development finance in 1983-84. More recently, he chaired the League's strategic planning efforts in 1991-92.

At the August board meeting, William Johnstone was elected Vice-President, Ellen Benavides, Secretary, and J.

David Hutcheson, Treasurer.

In the June elections, eight board members won three-year terms: Mary Anderson, Peter Bell, John Brandl, Chuck Denny, Kent Eklund, Penny Hunt, Becky Malkerson and Tom McKeown. About 30 percent of

the members cast ballots.

In addition, the board named seven directors to one-year terms: Andrew Grossman, Pat Hasselmo, Sarah Janeczek, Jan Malcolm, Randy Peterson, Louise Sundin and Steve Young.

September health care forum will examine local market, new strategies

Twin Cities health care leaders will discuss the local market and their strategies at a special meeting on Friday morning, September 10. The meeting will also mark the release of *Minnesota Managed Care Review 1993*, the League's fourth annual analysis of key issues and trends in the local health care market. Watch your mail for details on time, location and price of the program.

Two panels of presenters will make the session a must for people tracking developments in this health care market. In the first session, executives from the major health plans will talk about their plans to create Integrated Service Networks (ISNs) under the 1993 Minnesota Care law and their ideas for partnering with provider organizations. Dr. K. James Ehlen of Medica and Mary Brainerd of HealthPartners are confirmed to attend. Marcus Merz of Preferred One and Dick Niemiec of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota are also expected.

Employers and providers will provide their insights during the second session. Gordon Sprenger of HealthSpan and Dr. Andrew J.K. Smith of Spectrum, a developing, multi-specialty "clinic without walls" will participate. Bob Cooley of the Minnesota Department of Employee Relations and Fred Hamacher of Dayton Hudson and the Business Health Care Action Group are also expected to participate.

The meeting will begin with a presentation of the key points in *Minnesota Managed Care Review 1993* by Allan Baumgarten, author of the report. Since the first edition was published in 1990, the *Managed Care Review* has received a good deal of local and national attention, as a unique, objective analysis of developments in a closely followed market. Copies of the report and the accompanying managed care data set can be ordered from the Citizens League office (612/338-0791).

Mark your calendars:

41st

**Annual Meeting
October 6, 1993
Guest Speaker:
John Rollwagen**

36 meetings from October to July

Mind-Opener meetings draw large crowds, top speakers

Attendance at Mind-Opener breakfast meetings approached 2,000 this year. Average attendance was 54. We heard from a diverse group of presenters, including CEOs, carpenters and commissioners, legislators, lawyers and labor leaders, presidents and professors, doctors and economic developers.

This was the first year that meetings went into the summer, and that experiment worked fine. We also tested a variety of locations, including the Normandy Inn in Minneapolis, the University Club in St. Paul and the Airport Hilton in Bloomington.

We appreciate the participation of these speakers. *Job training:* Bobbie Henrie, Jim Benson, Valerie Pace, Bob Vanasek and Nils Hasselmo. *State finances:*

Sen. Gene Merriam, John Gunyou, Bernard Brommer and Roger Hale. Health care: Bryan Dowd and Roger Feldman, Therese Zink, Sen. Linda Berglin and Tom Swain. Metropolitan challenges: Rep. Myron Orfield, Samuel Myers, Dottie Rietow, Mark Andrew and Doug Tenpas. The business of the environment: Robin Young, George Hite, Barbara Schonwetter and Eric Bloomquist. Tax policy: Rep. Pam Neary, Wayne Cox, Cliff Hoffman and Paula Prah

Legislative review: Sen. John Marty, Sen. Ted Mondale and Sen. Duane Benson. Public education: John James, Sen. Ember Reichgott, Doug Wallace and Gene Mammenga. Airport and NWA: Richard Braun, Jeff Hamiel, Tim Griffin and Rep. Jean Wagenius.

How do housing policies affect poverty?

Housing and Metropolitan Development study underway

The CL's new study committee on Housing Policy and Metropolitan Development will meet for the first time on August 18. Resource guests will be John Adams, professor of geography at the University of Minnesota, and Tom Fulton, president of the Minneapolis-St. Paul Family Housing Fund.

The committee, chaired by Randy Peterson, is charged with examining whether new housing policies should be adopted to address the concentration of poverty in the Twin Cities. More than 100 Citizens League members will

participate as members of the committee.

Other opportunities are available for those who are interested in the issue but aren't able to commit to weekly meetings. Speak Ups! will be conducted this fall both among the League membership and with other "stakeholders" in the housing issue. A Mind-Opener breakfast series on housing is also in the works. And a "forum" on housing is available day or night on Citizens League On-Line, our computer public affairs bulletin board. Call the League office for information about these opportunities.

CITIZENS  LEAGUE

A community resource

For more than 40 years, the Citizens League has helped shape the unique character of this metropolitan region. Here are some examples of Citizens League resources benefitting our community.

Buy our three new publications

1993 property tax review

The League's annual survey of homestead property taxes will be published in the *Minnesota Journal* in September. The Minnesota Taxpayers Association is joining forces with the League to produce this year's edition. The two groups will also publish *Minnesota Homestead Property Tax Review 1993*, the expanded version of the survey. Copies will be available for purchase from the League office.

Public Affairs Directory of the metropolitan area, 1993-94

The new edition of the League's *Public Affairs Directory* will be available later this month. The Directory is an invaluable listing of people and organizations that are involved with public policy.

To order your copy, call the League office at 338-0791.

Minnesota Managed Care Review 1993

Minnesota Managed Care Review 1993, the League's fourth annual analysis of Minnesota's dynamic healthcare marketplace, will be available in early September.

Call the League for information on quantity discounts, 338-0791.

Use our two new data sets

Do you like your health care and local government finance data in mass quantities?

The Citizens League will sell you the data sets that we developed to produce the new property tax and managed care reports. The sets are available in popular spreadsheet formats, like Excel and Lotus 1-2-3, and can be used on your PCs or Macintosh computers.

Call Allan Baumgarten at 338-0791 for more information.

FYI

Hillary Rodham Clinton will speak at a conference on the administration's proposals for health reform on Friday, September 17. Call Rep. Martin Sabo's office for details, 348-1649.

Governor names members to metro region advisory group

Governor Carlson announced his appointments last week to the advisory council on metropolitan governance established by the 1993 Legislature.

They are: Polly Peterson Bowles, Mary Hauser, Jim Hetland, Diane Harbutz and Wayne Popham. Hetland and Popham are past presidents of the Citizens League. Bill Johnstone and Yusef Mgeni were among the legislative appointees.