

MINNESOTA Journal

A PUBLIC POLICY MONTHLY FROM THE CITIZENS LEAGUE

Volume 17, Number 8 • August 22, 2000

High-flying airport rating: An international survey by the International Air Transport Association reported in the July issue of *Governing* ranked the Minneapolis-St. Paul airport 14th in the world in overall customer satisfaction, ahead of Atlanta, Seattle, Orlando and Houston. Of U.S. airports, only Cincinnati ranked higher. Nineteen criteria were used, from ease of connections to food quality.
—Lyle Wray

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Leaders offer more suggestions for budget priorities

Part 2 of 2.

Editor's Note: In the interest of contributing to the work now underway on the Governor's fiscal year 2002-2003 biennial budget, the Minnesota Journal asked a group of community leaders to offer their suggestions for priority issues for the budget and for the next legislative session. Last month's responders included: Dee Long of Minnesotans for an Energy Efficient Economy; Hennepin County Commissioner Mark Stenglein; Russ Adams of the

Alliance for Metropolitan Stability; and Duluth Mayor and League of Minnesota Cities President Gary Doty.

This month's responders include: David Doth, director of the Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support; Rip Rapson, president of the McKnight Foundation; Dick Moberg, vice president of Montage Marketing Services; and Peter Wyckoff, executive director of the Minnesota Senior Federation-Metropolitan Region.

Support housing, 'U', health care, special adoptions, local revenues

by David Doth

The Ventura Administration's deliberations about priorities and directions for his proposed 2002-2003 biennial budget are underway. Where should the Governor propose new spending? What are some of his challenges? How do we struggle with a vision for the state's future?

Governor Ventura had it right in his 1999 Big Plan: "Local economies won't be healthy or vital without available affordable housing for every citizen—and especially for new workers." But this is a statewide issue needing the Governor's continued leadership and a place in his next budget.

The University of Minnesota is a critical state asset. It is a state asset no less important than our lakes, rivers and farmlands. As an economic engine it continually advances the level of human capital everywhere in the state. As a center for innovation and new technologies, tangible economic benefits accrue to the region. This is a big-ticket item. This university needs stepped-up, long-term support from the Governor and the Legislature.

The Big Plan also raised the challenge of building a "Health System for the Next 50

Years." Good idea. Too bad on any given day there are still 40,000 kids who are uninsured and still looking for a health system that will take care of today's ear infection or tomorrow's broken wrist. Governor Ventura has consistently stood up for poor kids. As a society we have to finish the job, simplify the system and extend health care coverage to all kids.

Pay attention to the health-care safety net. Community clinics and a few community hospitals are providing an extraordinary amount of uncompensated care. This safety net of community providers is threatened. The topic is complicated, health plans can't resolve the matter alone and reasonable people often disagree; but these community providers do need state support.

Five years ago Minnesota emerged as a national leader in the adoption of special needs children—kids with disabilities and physical challenges. Ensuring a home for every kid is a state priority and thousands of special needs children have been adopted over the last five years. This is a quiet program that is working. But permanent placements cost money and increases in adoption assistance need support next session.

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Change calls for innovative education sector, as it did in retailing

by Ted Kolderie

Radical, disruptive change hit the department store business—Dayton's included—in the 1950s. It was called "suburbs."

Suddenly customers no longer had to get on the bus or streetcar and ride downtown. They could drive to big new stores with lots of free parking and stores open evenings. And some of those stores were low, gray boxes with a big red 'K' on the front: discount stores.

The corporation responded. It opened Southdale, one of the first upscale, indoor suburban shopping malls. And it created a new subsidiary that took "the bargain basement" out of the old downtown store and put it in new buildings in the suburbs. It was its discount house: Target.

This was exceptional. Most department stores did not respond aggressively. Dayton-Hudson is, in fact, the only American department store firm to become a leader in discount retailing, says Clayton Christensen, a professor at Harvard Business School, in a recent article (*Harvard Business Review*, March/April 2000). His article is full of implications for the challenge now confronting American school districts.

State switched signals

Radical, disruptive change has hit school districts. Suddenly the state has switched signals.

Before, the message to the districts was that students didn't really have to learn. Kids had to attend and had to take certain courses. But the state wasn't going to check whether they learned and nothing bad would happen to anybody if they didn't. No standards; no tests; no scores published.

Now the state says: Kids *do* have to learn. We will tell you what they have to learn and how well. We *are* going to check if they learn and something *will* happen to somebody if they don't.

This switch has huge implications for districts. They are not now built to put learning first. Over the years, comforted by the state's assurance that learning didn't really count, they have done all kinds of things they would never have done—and have not done all kinds of things they *would* have done—if learning really had been imperative.

Worse: On the horizon are new forms of school: low-budget, not flashy; smaller, doing things differently from "regular school." Regular school is losing market share steadily to the alternative programs, charter schools, home schools, private schools. It is having trouble finding superintendents and principals, having trouble innovating, having trouble containing its costs.

This challenge—this combination of radical change in the districts' "assignment" and the appearance of the "disruptive innovations" in their market—will require a radical response by districts.

Create innovative sector

But how can districts respond dramatically, quickly?

The answer—the Christensen analysis suggests—is to do what Dayton-Hudson (now Target Corp.) did in setting up Target Stores: Create a "new organizational space," their own innovative sector. State law now makes this possible. Through the charter law a district can create new and different schools that are part of the board's program of public education, yet are separate from the status-quo culture of the existing district administration.

Districts ought to do this, if only to get at the problem of high school.

The large, three-or-four-year, comprehensive American high school is a disaster, Judy Coddington and Tom Vander Ark said, cold turkey, to the Education Commission of the States national meeting in Minneapolis July 11. "Half the kids are on a treadmill to nowhere," said Coddington, who heads the National Center on Restructuring Education.

Vander Ark is a former superintendent who now heads the education program for the largest private foundation in the world, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. "Half the students wander through high school on the 'general track', a path of least resistance and low expectations that results in a lack of marketable skills," he wrote in *Education Week* June 21. "A quarter of the students never finish high school at all."

Like most established organizations, high schools are terribly hard to change.

The only way for districts to change high school is to get outside the old culture. In Chicago, in desperation, says Fred Hess of Northwestern University, the Vallas administration is now letting elementary schools add secondary grades.

Traditionally districts would not do this. But it's possible this is changing.

Testifying before the House K-12 Finance Committee June 28, Charles Kyte said that as superintendent in Northfield he'd wanted the board to see itself as supervising all forms of school: its owned schools, area learning centers, its charter school, home schools. Kyte is the new executive of the Minnesota Association of School Administrators.

Paul Houston, the executive of the superintendents' national association, also argues for a new view. "I'm now trying as hard as I can," he says, "to persuade my people of the difference between keeping the faith and preserving the church." Public education is a set of principles, Houston says, about access, equity and accountability. "If we keep that faith it will be OK to change the church. The church is not the faith."

Creating an innovative sector would be logical—a strategic move for districts. But don't bet it will happen. The board in

"Districts are in denial, as if a quarter or (in big cities) half the freshmen not graduating were not as bad as a tornado taking out a quarter of the houses of a city."

Milwaukee thinks this way. (See *Minnesota Journal*, Sept. 21, 1999.) But that board is exceptional.

Mostly, districts are in denial, as if a quarter or (in big cities) half the freshmen not graduating were not as bad as a tornado taking out a quarter of the houses of a

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Viewpoint

From the Executive Director

Linked in the web: Citizens, government, business

by Lyle Wray

Driven by the explosion in computer and Internet use, we are on the threshold of major changes in the way citizens, government and business interact. One way to help us think about the emerging impacts of technology is to look at these interactions in terms of who initiates an action and who responds.

Business to customer/citizen. The greatest attention so far has been focused on individual customers buying goods and, increasingly, services, over the web. "E-tailing" is here to stay (even though the final size of this slice of the retail pie is unknown). Issues that will demand attention include privacy, the changing world of intellectual property rights and taxation of electronic commerce.

Business to business. This is where the money is. Many economists project trillions of dollars in annual business-to-business transactions in the next five years. The automotive, steel and agricultural sectors are already forming buying systems on the web that dwarf in size the wildest dreams of total individual customer purchases on the web. The major issue here is maintaining appropriate levels of competition in the marketplace. Major restructuring is already underway in manufacturing

systems, from design through supply-chain management, using the web. Economists expect major cost savings and productivity gains as this process unfolds.

Government to citizen. More and more governments are using the web to provide information, services and payment options to citizens around the world. A recent survey by the National League of Cities found that 89 percent of the 400 cities surveyed had websites. Citizens used these websites to make requests or comments (72 percent), conduct financial transactions (58 percent), download forms and other information (31 percent), and complete and submit forms and applications (eight percent).

Local government web services have often been combined with one-stop citizen service centers and state-of-the-art information systems to respond to information requests and citizen concerns. Brisbane, Australia, is one of the pioneers in the use of sophisticated call centers that provide a simpler interface between citizens and government. Many companies are coming forward—for a fee from local governments—to manage transactions with citizens, from the payment of bills to requests for documents.

Business to government. Government is a huge purchaser of everything from office supplies to roads. Just as industry is building up purchasing and supply management on the web, so, too, is government. Putting more government purchasing on the web, with expanded buying pools, has a good chance of saving money and improving efficiency. Again, many companies are coming forward as brokers for local governments for these functions.

Government to business. Government spends a great deal of time in regulation, licensing and inspections of business. Such functions as property-tax assessment, building inspections and law enforcement will be dramatically aided by "wireless-web" services being demonstrated at sites around the country. Government can certainly benefit from a more efficient and effective regulatory system using web-based technology.

Government to government. With over 200 governments in the Twin Cities metro area alone, technology can help link governments to work together smarter in the coming years. One recent high-profile example in Minnesota is the proposed system to allow better sharing of information among law-enforcement entities. Sharing of geographic information systems among local and regional governments and business will also be useful for service planning.

Citizen to citizen. This area has received relatively little attention so far. The opportunity here is to link citizens in public deliberation on important issues of the day or to bring them together to improve communities. Issues of basic access to the web—the so-called "digital divide" is one important example—are likely to persist, as surely as did access to public libraries and telephones.

Citizen to government. We have already seen the Internet used for primary and local elections. Instant opinion polls and easy access to e-mail provide lawmakers with immediate (if not necessarily representative) information on the views of their constituents. How the Internet will be used for voting or for referenda will be hotly debated in the near future. The increase in pressure for more direct democracy will certainly raise a wide variety of issues about the role of representative democracy versus hearing more directly the voice of the people.

These are just some of the issues we will need to watch as the web wave hits us harder. Addressing these issues will require thoughtful deliberation and ongoing discussions with citizens, public officials and businesses. The challenge for an organization like the Citizens League, with our historic strength in involving citizens in tackling tough problems, is to devise new ways to discuss public issues and continue our tradition of coming up with good ideas to make Minnesota a better place. **MJ**

Lyle Wray is executive director of the Citizens League.

The Minnesota Journal

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The Minnesota Journal (ISSN 0741-9449) is a publication of the Citizens League, a nonprofit nonpartisan Twin Cities public affairs organization, 708 S. Third St., Suite 500, Minneapolis, MN 55415. Phone: (612) 338-0791. Fax: (612) 337-5919. E-mail: info@citizensleague.net. Web site: www.citizensleague.net. George Latimer, president. Articles and commentary are drawn from a broad range of perspectives and do not necessarily reflect League positions on policy questions. The Journal is published once a month. Periodicals postage paid at Minneapolis, MN.

Annual subscription rate for nonmembers is \$40 for 12 issues. Orders may be placed at (612) 338-0791 or by mail at the above address.

Postmaster: Send address changes to the Minnesota Journal, 708 S. Third St., Suite 500, Minneapolis, MN 55415.

city. Mainly the response is to affirm their altruism and good intentions (which are real), to appeal for loyal support and additional resources, and to make incremental changes in the schools—tinkering with the old model. And, of course, teaching kids how to pass tests.

You don't often see districts moving rapidly to create lots of secondary schools of a few hundred students, replacing the course-and-class model with schooling that gets young people to want to learn or moving them into adult settings—even graduating many—by age 16. The Twin Cities area is still full of 2,000- and 3,000-student, three-grade high schools. Radical changes are “not realistic,” district people say.

State as parent corporation

So look at it another way. Think of the state as the parent corporation, unable to change its old organization, so moving now to set up an innovative sector (its “Target Stores”) in the form of a charter sector separate from the districts.

Charter schools: Steady, moderate growth continues

Despite several recent high-profile closures, the number of charter schools in Minnesota continues a steady, moderate rate of growth. Taking into account five schools that have closed voluntarily or had their charters terminated in the last year, there will be 64 charter schools in operation in Minnesota this fall, including 16 new ones.

The 16 new schools will have a total estimated enrollment of 2,200 students—bringing total charter enrollment in the state above 10,000. The new schools range in size from 25 to 350 students. Eight are in Minneapolis, St. Paul or Ft. Snelling, one in a St. Paul suburb and seven outside the Twin Cities area. In addition, nine new charters have already been approved for fall 2001 start-up; it's expected another six or seven will be approved this fall and winter. —Dana Schroeder

NEW CHARTER SCHOOLS OPENING IN FALL 2000

School	Location	Sponsor	Projected enrollment
Aurora Charter School	Minneapolis	St. Mary's University	75
Cross Lake Charter School	Cross Lake	Commissioner of Children, Families and Learning (CFL)*	60
El Colegio Charter School	Minneapolis	Augsburg College	75
Family Academy	Little Canada	Intermediate Dist. #916	150
Fort Snelling Academy	Fort Snelling	Normandale Community College	250
HOPE Academy	St. Paul	Univ. of St. Thomas	350
Mexica Multicultural Educ. Charter School	St. Paul	St. Paul Public Schools	75
Minnesota Business Academy	St. Paul	St. Paul Public Schools	300
Minnesota Institute of Technology	St. Paul	Univ. of St. Thomas	350
Native Arts High School	Fort Snelling	St. Paul Public Schools	75
PEAKS Charter School	St. Cloud	Central Lakes Community College	60
RiverBend Academy	North Mankato	Commissioner of CFL*	120
Riverway Learning Community	Winona	Rochester Community/Technical College	45
Schoolcraft Learning Community	Bemidji	Commissioner of CFL*	120
Studio Academy	Rochester	College of Visual Arts	75
Yankton Country School	Balaton	Balaton Public Schools	25

*Previously approved on appeal by the State Board of Education

SOURCES: Minnesota Charter School Association and Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning.

“The state has to develop an innovative sector.”

Learning. Teachers in charter schools may like them, but unions do not. Officials oriented to regulation want these schools back “under control.” The closure of a big charter school in Saint Paul is arguably a demonstration of accountability, a point in favor of the charter sector; it is in no way a failure of the idea. But it has set opponents crying for “tighter regulation.”

Look for state policymakers to resist and to reject that effort. The state has to have a system that works. It has worn out trading money for promises. The state has to develop an innovative sector.

The state owed it to the districts to give them the capacity now to respond to that challenge. It was the state, after all, that created the challenge by switching signals, insisting that kids do have to learn. With districts now able to create an innovate sector of their own the question next is, Will they use it? MJ

Ted Kolderie is contributing editor of the

Finally, the economic health of local governments also needs a frank discussion. The marked expansion in state revenues over the last eight years has not happened at the local level. Local tax sources haven't grown nearly as fast. Nor has the

state enacted significant increases in local government aid or revenue sharing. Cities and counties now face huge budget pressures and shortfalls. It's time to look at broader sharing of ongoing state revenue surpluses with local governments.

Put childcare and early childhood education high on priority list

by Rip Rapson

The commentaries that have graced these pages leave no doubt that the next legislative session will not be at a loss for spending and service redesign priorities—strengthening environmental protection, improving access to economic and social opportunity, restructuring utilities—to say nothing of educational reform, workforce development and economic competitiveness.

Childcare and early childhood education need to be high on the list.

Our foundation's involvement with welfare reform, coupled with research in the child development field and with our ongoing grant making, has made it clear that improvements in the state's early childhood system are an indispensable ingredient in promoting the state's economic competitiveness, creating meaningful access to economic opportunity and ensuring family resilience and stability. But such a priority will require a more balanced, mature view of childcare:

- ▲ Childcare as a developmental and educational building block, not as a babysitting service.
- ▲ Childcare as an investment, not as a cost center.
- ▲ Childcare as a workforce development strategy, not as a charitable impulse.
- ▲ Childcare as a social good, not as a necessary evil.

It will also require that we move on a number of fronts simultaneously.

First, assuring the highest quality among childcare workers. Whether providing incentives for staff training, rewarding long-term experience, or increasing wages and benefits, we need to explore creatively how to attract and retain professionals whose skills and judgments are commensurate with the responsibility of placing in their hands our children's future.

Second, increasing funding for very early childhood development. Programs like Early Head Start, which focus on children in their first three years of life and increase parental involvement, pay enormous long-term dividends.

David Doth (David.Doth@ci.minneapolis.mn.us) is a former state budget director and commissioner of human services. He now directs the Department of Health and Family Support in the City of Minneapolis.

Third, expanding access to childcare. There is no excuse not to raise the sliding fee to cover all eligible families, either on its own or in conjunction with a blending with Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF—known in Minnesota as the Minnesota Family Investment Plan, or MFIP) to create a single, seamless system.

Fourth, enabling parents to spend more time with infants. Legislation to pilot a parental leave program failed last session, but its impulse to remove some of the economic obstacles to parents being able to be at home to “bond” with their babies was right on the mark.

Elevating the importance of early childhood is the next logical step in our state's already strong commitment to improving the well being of children and families. It is a priority for parents, for businesses and for communities as a whole. It's time it becomes a priority for our public decision-makers.

Rip Rapson (info@mcknight.org) is the president of the McKnight Foundation.

Tackle ‘work-readiness’ divide: give entry-level workers another chance

by Dick Moberg

There is a “work-readiness” divide separating our labor force that is more important than the often-mentioned digital divide. I approach this issue from the perspective of a small business (120 employees).

As the unemployment rate has declined, our business has experienced increasing difficulty finding workers for entry level, low-skill jobs who are “work ready”. Work readiness for us starts with the basic disciplines that result in reliable attendance, showing up for work on time and the use of good English in written and verbal communication. We try to coach new employees who exhibit work-readi-

ness problems. But there have been too many instances where we were not successful.

Lack of work readiness causes loss of opportunity for the problem individual, for employers and for the community as a whole. Employees who are not work ready increase cost, reduce the quality of output and cause dissention among other employees. The marketplace for our services, on the other hand, is looking for us to find ways to cut costs and improve quality.

Our experience is evidence of the need for a workforce development program targeted at new entrants to the labor force who, for whatever reason, are unskilled and who are seeking entry-level work.

Our experience also suggests that

workers who are not work ready have the underlying potential to do well, but are held back by their poorly developed basic skills and disciplines. Training can address these deficiencies—but small businesses, and I believe most businesses, are poorly positioned and equipped to do the training.

Therefore, I believe that the Legislature should include workforce development for unskilled workers on its priority list during the upcoming session. In particular, I advocate the passage of legislation that results in the development, availability and funding of a program of

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postsecondary “basic employment training” targeted at those who want to increase their chances of getting and keeping an entry level job and ultimately advancing their careers.

By our experience, subjects that should be covered include:

- ▲ What employers expect from employees—including promptness and reliability;
- ▲ What employees can expect from employers;
- ▲ Basic business communication skills—oral and written
- ▲ Basic arithmetic skills;
- ▲ Basic data-entry skills;
- ▲ Customer relations;
- ▲ Subordinate/supervisor relations;
- ▲ Team participation.

The intended result is to improve both the skills and disciplines of this segment of

the workforce, thereby enabling more people to be successful workers and to achieve economic success.

Graduates of the program should be certified, based on their performance. The certification will make them more competitive in the job market.

One can argue that it is an individual responsibility to take advantage of K-12 education to become work ready. And that it is an individual responsibility to figure out how to fund postsecondary training or education. I agree with the principles underlying those arguments. But the simple reality is that some people haven’t developed work skills and disciplines—for a variety of reasons—and are in a hole before their working life has even begun.

My proposal is to give low-skill, entry-level job seekers another chance and a

better chance to become productive and successful. Public funding is necessary in as-much as this segment of the labor force is least likely to be able to afford the cost of training.

There has probably never been a better time to bring people into the labor force. The demand for qualified workers exceeds the supply and is expected to continue to grow. And yet, those who are not work ready are likely to be among those falling behind economically, in spite of a booming economy.

If investment in workforce development can pay off, now has to be one of the best times ever to make it happen. I believe the pay-off will benefit everyone.

Dick Moberg (ramoberg@montagenet.com) is vice president of Montage Marketing Services.

Reform property taxes, control prescription drug prices for state seniors

by Peter Wyckoff

2001 presents Minnesota an opportunity to respond to increasing needs of our “graying” state. The agenda for seniors includes transportation, long-term/home- and community-based care, tax reform and health care. The Minnesota Senior Federation will be focusing on two of these issues during the coming session: prescription drug costs and property-tax reform.

Prescription drug costs. While seniors comprise roughly 11 percent of the state’s population, they purchase over 30 percent of all prescription drugs. Persons under 65 legally cannot buy health coverage as bad as that provided by Medicare itself. Among its failings is a lack of outpatient prescription drug coverage, at the very time people need drug coverage the most. The problem is particularly acute in Minnesota, where over two-thirds of Medicare beneficiaries have no prescription drug coverage and Medicare reimbursement is as much as one-half as it is in other parts of the country. Drug prices for people without drug coverage are about 200 percent higher than those with coverage. Costs for prescription drugs for seniors, as well as employers and health plans, are growing at a rate of almost 25 percent a year, reflecting drug manufacturers’ predatory pricing practices and net profits that are over twice as high

as other Fortune 500 companies. Congress thus far has proven to be impotent in dealing with this crisis in coverage and prices, given the power of the drug industry and the influence they have bought.

Minnesota is but one of almost 30 states that will attempt to rein in drug costs during their current and 2001 sessions. The “competitive market place” for prescriptions has been corrupted by international protectionist legislation, overzealous patent protections and draconian and largely secret drug-pricing structures established by drug companies. So finding solutions to allow states to “buy smart,” as the rest of the world does, will not be easy. Comprehensive prescription drug price reform needs to be a major issue before the 2001 session.

Property-tax reform. While property-tax reform has become a significant issue for the state, no group is hurt by the current property residential property-tax system more than Minnesota’s seniors. Recent surveys showed seniors pay almost double the amount of their income for property taxes as younger homeowners. Out of the major taxes paid by citizens, none is more regressive than the property tax. The residential property tax is far less built on ‘the ability to pay’ than the other major taxes we pay, namely the sales and income tax.

The property tax is also built on

almost 200-year-old, out-of-date concepts that equate wealth to property owned. Our current residential property-tax system actually discourages improvements to property and leads to urban blight. As too often seen in school bonding referenda, the current property-tax system unfortunately tends to pit generation against generation. Is it any wonder that Governor Ventura rightly called for the “blowing up of the current property tax system”?

However, few seem willing to do anything but tinker around the edges. The simplest, most equitable and most cost-effective approach is to replace the current residential property tax with a local income tax (to pay for county, city and school services) of between one and three percent of a homeowner’s combined income. Fiscal disparities can continue to be overcome as they are now and administration of the tax would be simple and far less costly than the millions we now pay to assess the current tax. Failing this approach, the 2001 session needs to greatly improve the current income-adjusted property and renters’ credit to fully limit the property tax to no more than a certain percentage of a household’s income.

Peter Wyckoff (ptwyckoff@mnseniors.org) is the executive director of the Minnesota Senior Federation-Metropolitan Region. MJ

OnBalance

Views From Around the State

“The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function.”—F. S. Fitzgerald.

Bemidji Pioneer said (Aug. 2) the state, “in its rush to seek accountability, has been met with failure at every stroke.” The state should have had checks in place that would have caught the recently disclosed scoring errors on the basic standards math test. The Legislature has moved from one plan to another to ensure a curriculum that would allow students to pass the tests. “The latest, the Profile of Learning, is politically unacceptable and has a future that will see it eliminated or heavily modified.” But “students and teacher should be held accountable for what is learned and what is taught,” the paper said. “That is the state’s responsibility. . . Perhaps the greater problem in accountability—and credibility—now lies with the administration and the Legislature.” **Star Tribune** said (Aug. 4) both the Department of Children, Families and Learning and any private firm the state hires must check and double-check results of the tests. The paper said the department must also respond more promptly to parent concerns and set tests far enough in advance to catch mistakes. It should also use a new set of questions each cycle—despite the added costs—so it can return the corrected tests to students and parents. It said (Aug. 1) that this mix-up “is no reason to give up on Minnesota’s high-stakes tests. Since the eighth-grade level exams were first given in 1996, the tests have done far more good than harm to improve K-12 education.”

St. Paul Pioneer Press said (Aug. 1) that the state should not stop giving the tests. “Testing is a human enterprise and, thus, prone to mistakes. National Computer Systems needs to make up its mistakes to the state and to kids who did better than they got credit for. And the Department of Children, Families and Learning “needs to step up to its role as the ultimate overseer of test scores.” **Brainerd Daily Dispatch** said, “[I]t may be time to ask whether the state isn’t putting too much emphasis on so-called

“high-stakes” testing to determine who gets a diploma.” But the paper said “[W]e can’t abolish standardized tests without risking a return to the dark days when schools routinely graduated students who couldn’t read. . . However, the basic-skills mess shows that education should construct some kind of safety net beneath high stakes testing. We now know that not only can students fail tests, the tests can also fail students.” **Mankato Free Press** said (Aug. 2) the state needs to take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that the scoring snafu on the basic skills test doesn’t get repeated. Students and parents need to be assured that the state will increase its oversight of both the testing and scoring procedures.

Rochester Post-Bulletin pointed out (July 3) that testing has revealed deficiencies in a number of schools and led to focused efforts by teachers and students to make improvements. The paper said we should continue mandatory testing, use every possible means to help students pass the tests and look for additional ways to evaluate students’ progress more effectively. **Red Wing Republican Eagle** said (July 28) the Legislature’s last-minute action allowing school districts to choose which graduation standards to use “makes the standards confusing and—in some cases—meaningless to customers of the public education system.” The Legislature could have streamlined the requirements as a compromise to those who wanted the Profile repealed. “The Legislature did little to sort through the controversy of the Profile of Learning this past 2000 session. It deserves to be on the agenda once again for 2001.”

West Central Tribune (Willmar) said (June 24) Minnesota policymakers and educators should take another look at the charter school movement after the abrupt closing of St. Paul’s Success Academy in June. The paper said, “Very few, if any, charter schools offer innovative instructional programs. . . Even though charter

schools are proliferating, assurances of accountability are few. . . We think the Legislature should enact a moratorium on new charter schools until lawmakers restore some reason and accountability in the process of creating and funding charters.” **Duluth Tribune** disagreed (June 30) and said the “mismanagement of one charter school shouldn’t reflect on others, nor should it have the effect of diluting support for the charter movement...The report card so far. . . is that charter schools are generally succeeding very well. But as in other areas of education, there are bound to be failures, too.” **Pioneer Press** said (July 7) , “Well-run charter schools should demonstrate financial responsibility, effective curricula, good student attendance and a staff of certified teachers.” It said the state needs to reconsider the cost of charter school sponsorship and pick up a far larger portion of the tab.

Post-Bulletin said (July 12) districts must address the issue of teacher pay. It offered two suggestions: adding merit pay and extending teacher contracts from nine months to 10 or 11 months to satisfy the growing need for more teaching time. “The added pay from a longer work year would allow districts to pay higher overall salaries, which would make the profession more attractive.” **Republican Eagle** suggested (July 6) the call for better teacher wages won’t be received well without tackling the issue of “pay for performance.” It credited the National Education Association with voting to explore a bargaining policy that would include bonus pay. Pay-for-performance plans usually pay teachers bonuses if they’re judged to be good at what they do, accept extra or difficult assignments, mentor others or, more controversially, if they have students who score higher on tests. The paper noted that “Teachers are educating students to enter the real world where, in most jobs, they will be paid based on performance. It’s reasonable that teachers be held to similar criteria.” **MJ**

TakeNote

Policy Tidbits

Juicy policy bones for the dog days of summer.

Mass transit investments: David Luberoff reported in the July issue of *Governing* that nationwide, buses carry more than 60 percent of mass transit passengers, but receive only 33 percent of transit capital investments. Light-rail transit, by contrast, carries three percent of mass transit riders and receives 12 percent of capital funds. Commuter rail carries four percent of passengers and gets 19 percent of capital funds. The capital investment in each mode correlates with the per capita income of riders on that mode: the lowest income riders get the lowest per capita investment and the highest income the greatest.—*Lyle Wray.*

There's a breakthrough in fuel cells, *The Economist* reports. In fuel cells oxygen and hydrogen react to produce electricity. They, rather than batteries, now look to be what will power automobiles after petroleum. Engineering improvements at General Motors have produced a small fuel cell, the equal of a 1,600 cc. engine, that delivers up to 65 percent of its energy to the wheels—three times the efficiency of a gasoline-burning engine. Its exhaust is water. GM hopes to have a car in showrooms by 2004.—*Ted Kolderie.*

The good news: For democracy and freedom, the 20th was a very good century, according to the Jan., 2000, *Journal of Democracy*. In 1900, there were no electoral democracies with universal suffrage; by 2000, there were 120. In 1990, only 12 percent of the world's population lived in electoral democracies; by 2000, the figure had climbed to 63 percent.

The bad news—from the world's leading democracy, the United States—is reported by the Pew Research Center: While 79 percent of Americans have cable or satellite TV, 59 percent have home computers and a third say they both “like the news a lot” and “like all the new ways they can get it,” 71 percent are unaware of the federal budget surplus and 56 percent have no idea who Alan Greenspan is.—*Janet Dudrow.*

Among parents of children in public schools, support for vouchers has risen from 51 percent in 1994 to 60 percent in 2000, according to a poll by Phi Delta Kappa. Among African Americans, 60 percent support vouchers—an all-time high—and among those under 35, 70 percent support vouchers, according to a poll by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. Both polls were reported in the July 15 *The Economist*.—*L.W.*

Superintendent Charles Kyte learned an important lesson when he organized the first evaluation of the charter school in Northfield, he told a House K-12 Finance Committee hearing recently. “If you send traditional people to look at an innovative program, they’ll come back saying it’s not a good program.”—*T.K.*

All the testing of kids in schools has not only caused schools to teach to the test: It’s creating a new industry in *tutoring* for the test. Families are buying; districts are buying. Vendors—both of in-person and of on-line tutoring—are looking at this quickly becoming a \$2-billion-a-year industry, it was reported at an education-industry conference in Detroit July 28. What have we done?—*T.K.*

If divorcing parents need another reason to keep their kids out of their marital squabbles: Researchers at the Center on the Demography of Aging at Johns Hopkins have found that elderly divorced people are less likely to live with their children and more likely to rely on formal paid care than

their nondivorced peers. And divorced dads who get informal help from their kids get 18 fewer hours a week of quality time than widowed parents. Divorce seems to affect the relationship between parents and kids well into the twilight years.—*J.D.*

Also on the aging front, from Japan, where 1.9 million people—1.5 percent of the rapidly-aging population—are in various stages of dementia: Mitsui, NTT DoCoMo (the phone company) and Zenrin (a map specialist) are developing a global positioning system (GPS)-based device that can be used to find disoriented elderly people when they wander off. A transmitter worn by the individual continuously sends coordinates to a server and the location can be displayed on a map in response to a search request—kind of a high-tech “clapper” for mom and dad. The developers are hoping Japan’s new nursing-care insurance program will pay for the units. Look for the gizmos on the market next year.—*J.D.*

Baby Boomers begin to go bust. In 1999, the number of baby boomers in the United States peaked at almost 79 million and will now dwindle steadily, according to *USA Today* (July 25). In 2031, the first boomers turn 85. In 2046, when the first boomers turn 100, there will be an estimated 19 million survivors.—*L.W.*

Contributors to “Take Note” include Minnesota Journal and Citizens League staff members and Janet Dudrow, policy analyst at Dorsey and Whitney in Minneapolis.

The Minnesota Journal
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PERIODICALS
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Welcome**New and returning members**

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 Lynn Gitelis
 Kathy Jorgensen and Kevin Hoyhtya
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 Leonard E. Lindquist
 Troy Mangan
 Thomas Poul
 Judith Schwartz
 Fred Senn
 Thomas Tuttle
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CITIZENS LEAGUE

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The Citizens League promotes the public interest in Minnesota by involving citizens in identifying and framing critical public policy choices, forging recommendations and advocating their adoption. The Citizens League is an open membership organization. Please call 612-338-0791 for more information about membership.

Mark your calendar!

Thursday, Sept. 21, 2000

Citizens League 47th annual membership meeting

Sign-up for new League study committees

Mind-Opener policy series kicks off the project on August 29

The Minnesota Department of Human Services has contracted with the Citizens League to address mental health policy in Minnesota. The project will look at two areas of particular concern: adult mental health and employment and children's mental health needs.

The project will begin with a series of Mind-Opener breakfast meetings (see the other side for details). After that the League will convene **two new study committees** — one to examine issues surrounding adult mental health and employment and the other to look at children's mental health issues. Each committee will meet about three times a month from September to December. Meeting times and committee chairs will be announced soon. No prior knowledge or expertise in the field of mental health is needed; in fact citizen generalists are encouraged to apply.

Adult Mental Health and Employment

Although many companies have begun to address the physical health and well-being of their employees, less attention has been given to employee's mental health. The cost — in both lost productivity and direct health care expenses — is significant.

People who have a mental disorder also remain a largely untapped resource for the dwindling labor supply, due to the stigma associated with mental illness.

The committee will examine:

- How do employees' mental health issues impact the workplace? Are there successful strategies to assure good mental health for employees?
- What can be done to address the barriers to hiring and retaining workers with mental health issues?
- Are employers aware of the services available and how can mental health and rehabilitation service providers connect with the business community?

Meeting the Mental Health Needs of Minnesota's Children

Because many adult mental health disorders have their roots in childhood, early intervention and prevention of childhood mental illness is essential for both the individual and society. Moreover, children require different diagnosis procedures and treatment approaches than adults.

Identifying and successfully treating children with mental health disorders is crucial to success in school, relationships at home and preparation for life as a contributing member of society.

This committee will examine:

- What policies and strategies should Minnesota pursue to identify and meet children's mental health needs?
- What resources are needed to guarantee access to mental health services for children in all of Minnesota's communities?
- What are the costs of failing to prevent or intervene in a child's mental health problem? How can we pay for the services needed?

Committee Membership Application

If you are interested in serving on one of the League studies on mental health, please fill out the form below and mail it to the League office or send us an email. You will also be able to sign up for the committees at the Mind-Openers.

Name _____
 Address _____

 City, St, Zip _____
 email _____
 daytime phone _____

Occupation _____
 Employer _____
 work address _____
 City, St, Zip _____

I am interested in ☐ Adult/employment ☐ children

Mail to Citizens League 708 South 3rd Street, #500, Minneapolis, MN 55415 or email info@citizensleague.net

MIND-OPENER POLICY SERIES

Mental Health in Minnesota

Tuesday, August 29

Michael O'Keefe

Commissioner
MN Dept. of Human Services

Commissioner O'Keefe will provide an introduction to mental health issues in Minnesota.

Thursday, August 31

Melinda Schamp

Mental Health Professional
Rise, Inc

Ms. Schamp will discuss efforts to employ individuals with mental illnesses

Thursday, September 7

Steven Lepinski

Executive Director
Washburn Child Guidance Center

Mr. Lepinski will address major issues in the field of children's mental health.

Research over the last few decades has dramatically increased our understanding of the causes and treatment of mental illnesses. New treatment strategies and drug therapies have made community-based care a reality for many individuals. Health care professionals are also increasingly promoting lifelong mental well-being rather than just the treatment of acute mental health problems.

At the same time, the stigma associated with mental illness continues to limit our ability to recognize and treat mental health problems. Some mental illnesses go undiagnosed as individuals struggle with the tasks of daily life. And people with serious mental illnesses are still left on the margins of society.

All meetings in this series will held from 7:30 - 8:30 a.m. at the Commodore, 79 Western Ave., St. Paul. Free parking is available. The cost is \$10 per person and includes a continental breakfast. Pre-registration is recommended, and can be made online, by emailing info@citizensleague.net, or by calling (612)338-0791.

Good ideas for a better place

Theme for Citizens League 47th annual meeting

This year's annual membership meeting, scheduled for Thursday evening, September 21, will give members a chance to talk about the life of the League. We'll dispense with our usual format of the past few years and instead give you a chance to join with other thoughtful people to talk about the League's future.

During the past year the League Board formed two sub-committees. One was asked to examine the League's mix of programs and activities and the other was asked to look at strategies to diversify revenue sources. The Board approved both reports in May, but decided the issues raised by the two groups warranted further discussion.

Executive Director Lyle Wray will begin the discussion with a brief contextual overview. Committee chairs Kent Eklund and Chris Roberts will outline the key themes in their reports ... and then we want to hear from *you*, members and friends of the Citizens League. George Latimer will lead the discussion as we break into small groups.

So mark the date — **Thursday, September 21** — on your calendars now. Details with exact time and place will be mailed soon.

A Retrospective on Planning in the Region

On September 15-17, the Humphrey Institute's Master of Urban and Regional Planning degree program will celebrate its 25th anniversary and its new role as a University of Minnesota interdisciplinary program. The weekend's events, which are open to the public, will bring together a variety of participants - alumni, practicing planners, urban policy makers, citizens, graduate students and former and current Planning faculty - to reflect on the history and future of urban and regional planning. League Director Lyle Wray will present his views at a Saturday morning panel on "A Half Century of Planning in the Region."

Throughout the celebration, discussions and events will revisit the University's contributions to and evaluations of the region's landmark planning initiatives. Speakers and panelists will include: John Adams, Ragui Assaad, John Bryson, Karen Chapple, Gerry Christenson, Margaret Dewar, Robert Einsweiler, Susan Hoyt, Barbara Lukermann, Ann Markusen, Bill Morrish and Jim Solem.

Tickets that cover admission to Friday evening activities and Saturday morning and afternoon events are \$40 (\$20 for students). Also included in the ticket price is a half-day motor coach tour of Twin Cities neighborhoods and development projects. Registration for the tour is extremely limited, however, so register for that early. A buffet dinner and Beaux-Arts Ball will be held in the University's Gateway Center. Tickets for the ball are \$50. For ticket/registration information, contact Michael Leary at 612-626-1074 or mleary@hhh.umn.edu.