



Minnesota Journal

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Primary election changes urged.—Page 3.

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Money woes drive governments to seek economies of scale

Consolidation. Contracting. Centralization. Collaboration.

In the past, these words have been anathema to city and county and other public officials who zealously guarded their local sovereignty and turf.

Now the pressure is on to make changes because of sharp fiscal constraints and loud demands from unhappy taxpayers for a slowdown in government spending.

The four Cs of government reform are hot topics on almost everybody's agenda.

by Betty Wilson

There's a sense that it's time for dramatic changes in government structure and delivery of services as sweeping as those in the 1960s. Then the Metropolitan Council and other metro agencies were formed to deal with planning, sewers, transit, parks and open space.

"I think the more the federal spigot turns off, the more we at the state level cut back on local government aid, the more local units will realize if they are to continue to provide high quality services to people they serve, that they will be almost forced into looking at new

ways of delivering those services," said Sen. Randy Kelly, DFL-St. Paul.

Kelly, chair of the Ramsey County Senate delegation, and other Twin Cities area legislators are watching closely a legislatively-mandated Ramsey County Local Government Services Study Commission study of such reforms.

A lot of things are already happening. Almost any city manager in the metro area can whip out a long list of services shared with neighboring suburbs. They range from

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Journalists to get policy databank

by Stephen Alnes

The day-long conference is a standard device allowing practitioners of various specialties to wallow in a pool of the latest knowledge in the belief, or at least the hope, they will absorb some of it.

And when Renee McGivern, executive director of the Minnesota Newspaper Foundation (MNF), sought a way to help outstate Minnesota journalists get smarter about state public policy, the conference was the first thought that came to mind.

"The interest on the part of editors and publishers for background information on public affairs was great," McGivern said. "But when I asked the second question—Would you free yourself up or send someone to a day-long seminar on various topics?—the answer was, 'No, probably not.'"

"So we were in a bind," McGivern added. "Okay, you want the information, but you don't want a seminar...Then let's try to figure out a different way that we can get that information to you."

MNF already knew, of course, that conferences have limitations,

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Legislature to consider policy on HIV-positive health-care workers

The 1992 Minnesota Legislature will have to decide the future course of public policy with respect to health-care workers infected with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), the virus that causes AIDS.

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and the Minnesota Board of Medical Practice (BMP) have proposed policy changes that are roughly similar. They are also consistent with guidelines issued in July 1991 by the U.S. Centers for

by Steve Kelley

Disease Control (CDC). But CDC early this month backed away from its July position. Meanwhile, at least one legislator is working on a bill that, taking a different course from all of the agencies, would require periodic mandatory testing of health-care workers.

Consideration of what to do about HIV-infected health-care workers begins with the question whether the government should restrict the

work activities of infected individuals.

Various segments of the medical community and a variety of AIDS activists argue that restrictions are unnecessary because the risk of a health-care worker infecting a patient is extremely low. Only one case of infection from health-care worker to patients has occurred: a Florida dentist apparently infected five of his patients, including the

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If lawmakers reform process, we don't need to

Muddling Through

by Stephen Alnes

Bills recently introduced in Congress would limit the number of years a House member could serve on a given committee and the number of years an individual could serve as a committee chair.

Both measures are seen as a congressional answer to a growing national demand—stemmed at least temporarily by an adverse vote in Washington State—for limits on the number of terms an elected official is allowed to serve.

Well, of course! If politicians would just reform politics and government, we wouldn't have to do it for them.

As an advocate of term limits, I have to concede they are a very blunt instrument. But so are elections. Like the rest of you, I get to vote for only two senators, one U.S. representative, one state senator and one state House member. We don't get to vote against a committee chair-tyrant-dingbat from another state or district.

Meanwhile, the district or state that is represented by a chair-tyrant-dingbat sees considerable merit in sending him/her back to office because the more often you do that, the more powerful she/he becomes and the more goodies she/he can deliver. It is at least possible that Washington rejected a term-limit proposal because it would have meant that House Speaker Thomas Foley, D-Wash., who returned home to campaign against the proposal, would have had to step down.

Moreover, an incumbent—particularly a powerful one—has a whole lot less trouble raising campaign money and a whole lot less trouble getting elected than does a challenger. The ante is high for political poker.

Congress and legislatures are slow to reform themselves. It took a Su-

preme Court decision to force reapportionment on the basis of one person, one vote after every census. Even so, the Gerrymander lives, and the courts often have to redraw the lines that lawmakers draw to suit themselves.

Congress seems unable to cut spending or raise taxes enough to begin reducing the growing budget deficit. It took the U.S. Senate's Ethics Committee 22 months of partisan feuding before it found nerve enough to say that Sen. Alan Cranston, D-Cal., had engaged in "improper and repugnant conduct" in receiving large contributions from financier Charles Keating while interceding with bank regulators on his behalf.

Here at home, it took several years of nagging by editorial writers, other reformers and a handful of lawmakers to get our Legislature to stop the ugly practice of holding fund-raisers during the legislative session. And the Legislature continues the even uglier practice in which legislators with safe districts and powerful positions receive far more in contributions than they

need and redistribute the extra money to colleagues to strengthen the givers' power.

And we saw, in the last election, one State Senate candidate spend \$175,000 on his election—quite a bit more than the job pays for a four-year term.

Conference committees continue to put material in bills that wasn't previously passed by either house. Christmas-tree bills aren't as bad as they used to be, I'm told, but they still light the legislative halls.

The even-year legislative sessions are largely undistinguishable from the odd-year sessions, except that the former tend to be more devoted to political posturing because those are election years. The last days of both sessions continue to be as frenzied as a food fight in a junior high school cafeteria. The drift toward a full-time Legislature proceeds unchecked with the result that legislators who have something else to do—like hold down a private-sector job—are driven out. And 3,000 or so bills are tossed into the in-basket each



session.

The legislators have the power—through legislation, rules changes or individual action—to enact reform on all these points. They have a scalpel. If they would use it, maybe those of us clamoring for the chance to employ the blunt instrument of term limits would shut up.

The opinions expressed above are those of the writer and not of the Citizens League.

Republican leaders offer health plan

Mary Jo O'Brien, deputy commissioner, Minnesota Department of Health, at Citizens League meeting Nov. 19.

This is not just the administration (health-insurance) proposal. This proposal was hammered out with the Republican leadership in both the House and the Senate...It is a commitment that and an understanding that this is just a first step, this is not the panacea...We purposely did not put a piece of legislation on the table...

The proposal is a commitment to spend at the full phase-in \$75 million a year...The plan is to phase in the children's portion of the bill within two years and the full implementation of the bill within four years. It raises revenue through...an 8-cents-per-pack increase in the cigarette tax starting Jan. 1 of 1992.

The proposal contains no man-

dates. There's not a mandate to offer health-care insurance for employers...There's not a mandate for individuals to carry health-care insurance...The proposal stays with an employer-based system...

We are recommending a...premium-supplement program...that will be available to families at 200 percent and below of the federal poverty level...The expectation is that the parents...will contribute 3 percent of their gross income toward the premium of carrying their children under health insurance...The total estimated cost of the first phase-in of the program is \$31.4 million at full implementation. That would be if all 70,000—which is estimated to be the number of uninsured children in Minnesota—were covered under this plan. Implementation is set to start as of Jan. 1, 1993...

We are requiring health-care plans to offer incentives to individuals

and families to choose to lead healthy lifestyles...

For the uninsured, we are recommending another premium supplement program...very similar to what we're proposing for the children. It's based on a gross contribution of 3 percent of individuals' and families' gross income...

We are...proposing more efficient administration of health-care plans...We're looking at...a uniform statewide billing system...We also are recommending creation of a medical technology-assessment advisory panel...We also recommend that practice parameters be instituted into the comprehensive basic benefit package...

We recommend implementation of medical malpractice-reform measures, such as defining expert witnesses, limiting the use of expert witnesses and encouraging the use of structured settlements...

Editors want change in presidential primary

On Balance

Nothing doth more hurt in a state than that cunning men pass for wise.—F. Bacon.

Duluth News-Tribune called upon (Nov. 27) the Legislature to fix the presidential primary law rather than kill it. Among cited flaws: no money to pay for the election; a requirement that voters disclose their party choice; the voters' choices are not binding on convention delegates.

Mankato Free Press said (Nov. 27) the state should hold a presidential primary only if the results are binding on the delegates to the nominating conventions. St. Cloud Times agreed (Nov. 20). West Central Tribune said (Nov. 26) Minnesota "does not need to shell out \$3 million to \$4 million next spring just to get on the presidential primary bandwagon." Rochester Post-Bulletin said (Nov. 26) it's difficult to make a case for a presidential primary if the results are "going to be ignored by party leaders."

St. Cloud Times criticized (Nov. 10) the use of additional cigarette taxes to fund a Minnesota health-insurance plan for the uninsured. Such a major undertaking needs a dependable and growing tax source, and cigarette smoking is declining, the paper said.

Star Tribune said (Nov. 27) a better source than the cigarette tax for funding a state health-insurance program would be to put a cap on the amount of health insurance an employer can provide tax free and tax any amount above that as income.

Free Press said (Nov. 11) Gov. Carlson's health-insurance plan is a good starting point for legislative

deliberation, "more focused and far less costly than the DFL plan vetoed by Carlson."

Worthington Globe said (Nov. 18) Minnesota is the "king of welfare" among the states because of the size of its assistance payments and the relative ease of getting them.

Star Tribune said (Nov. 14) Minnesota cannot afford to shut down the production of the Prairie Island nuclear power plant—"a major contributor to favorable electric rates in the state." It said Northern States Power should be allowed to store nuclear wastes at the site. Rochester Post-Bulletin said (Dec. 2) the Prairie Island Sioux have a right to be heard on the issue of nuclear-waste storage and expressed surprise that Twin Cities TV stations turned down a tribe-sponsored advertisement.

West Central Tribune said (Nov.

25) that small towns and rural areas outside the Twin Cities region "had better get their act together at the State Legislature" or they will "lose out in the growing rural-urban competition for state revenue."

Free Press said (Nov. 21) the "truth-in-taxation" statements mailed to taxpayers contained little truth or useful information. Unless more information is made available, the practice "will remain more confusing than helpful."

St. Cloud Times objected (Nov. 23) to a proposal by Rep. Bob McEachern to finance early-childhood education with the state's reserve fund. It added, "Minnesota politicians have developed an addiction for spending every penny they can lay their hands on." Free Press said (Nov. 29) the Legislature should not dip into the budget reserve or shift

spending in the next biennium in dealing with the budget shortfall but should cut spending.

Pioneer Press said (Nov. 29) state government needs a strategic plan for housing governmental offices that would provide guidance on which offices should be near the Capitol and which could be located elsewhere.

St. Cloud Times said (Nov. 17) that St. Cloud should be the site of "at least one" of the eight chartered schools allowed by the Legislature. A chartered school can show that education can occur absent the regulations and restrictions currently built into public education, the paper said.

Hibbing Tribune said (Nov. 29) schools should not distribute condoms to students. "Schools have enough to do without getting into the roles of other agencies."

Star Tribune said (Dec. 8) the decision to reimpose a limit on the time a person can be in the state's work-readiness program appears well-reasoned and humane.

Building on health-insurance base

Bob Johnson, executive vice president, Insurance Federation of Minnesota, at Citizens League meeting Nov. 26.

The guiding principle that we've followed...in putting together (our proposal) is to make health-care coverage more available and affordable (by) adjusting state law regarding mandates, dealing with health plan underwriting practices and health plan rating practices...

A significant number of those (without health insurance) are employed, and they work for small employers...Those small employers indicate...that the reason that they don't have coverage is...that they can't afford what's out there...

We feel that any health-care proposal...ought to...expand health-care access. We think that the current base of employer-financed coverage is an important base to maintain. If that gets displaced, somebody else is going to have to provide money to...match that capital commitment...We believe

some of the proposals, including the vetoed bill...and...the HMO proposal...generate some significant adverse effects on the existing base of insurance...

What we're proposing is a cheaper minimum core plan for the small-employer market, the two to 25-employee marketplace, with new ground rules that we would characterize as dramatic changes in how business is conducted today...(If) I'm a small employer and I have an employee who is...very sick, today in the marketplace there's a good chance I either can't afford or can't get coverage. Changing the laws to require insurers in that marketplace to guarantee that they will issue a policy to that employer is a dramatic change in the ground rules governing the private sector...There's a pricetag to pay for that. And the only way to deal with that pricetag is...through the creation of a reinsurance mechanism...

We're proposing a basic benefit package...that a health insurer

would have to sell to a small employer...Mandated benefits...increase costs and thereby lessen affordability to small employers...

We...have...agreed to sit down with the HMOs and the Blue Cross and to do our best to try to come together or to conclude on a list of areas that we can collectively support that will save dollars in administrative efficiencies...

All the players are talking about the need to redo the whole practice of medicine and to save dollars...by moving toward an outcomes-based medical system (under which) only that care that's necessary will be provided...

We do not support any sort of a mandatory system, either mandatory offer on employers or a mandate that employees have to have this coverage. We think that's the wrong direction...We do not support community rating...It's too dramatic a change for its negative effect...

New editor

Dana M. Schroeder, Minneapolis freelance editor and writer, was named interim editor of the Minnesota Journal to succeed Stephen Alnes, who is retiring. Alnes founded the publication in 1983, turned it over to the Citizens League in 1984 and continued as editor.

Deficits, deals, decisions, drives and desperation

Minnesota faces a revenue deficit of \$291 million in the biennium that began July 1, 1991, and could be forced to short-term borrowing. The impending deficit was blamed on lower-than-expected tax receipts. A \$1.3 billion gap is a possibility for the next biennium.

Some 6,000 Minnesotans were to be cut in December from a "work-readiness" program that pays them while they take training in job skills and job hunting. The program has a new five-month limit set by the Legislature to trim expenses. Another 1,500 will be cut each month.

The pricetag on the deal that involves construction of Northwest Airlines maintenance bases in Duluth and Hibbing rose to \$838 million, but the deal appeared to still be intact. However, the airline backed out of a deal to merge with Midway Airlines, claiming the numbers had been misstated. Midway closed.

A group of DFL women formed Minnesota \$Million to raise \$1 million in an effort to elect a DFL woman to the U.S. Senate seat now held by Republican David Durenberger in 1994.

The Regional Transit Board approved a light-rail transit plan that calls for two lines initially—one linking the Minneapolis and St. Paul downtowns and the other running south from Minneapolis along I-35. The plan goes to the Legislature.

The Pollution Control Agency Board voted 5-4 to kill the proposed \$160 million Dakota County incinerator. The agency released a report that said proposed expansion of the Potlatch Corp. paper mill in Cloquet would violate air-quality standards.

The Winona School Board approved a plan to allow privately run Bluffview Montessori School to become the nation's first charter school. If approved by the State Board of Education, the school would receive state aid and retain authority to make operational decisions.

Teachers struck in Rochester. They asked a 10.1 percent increase in salaries and benefits over two years. The district offered 7.1 percent. Rochester School Board cancelled a \$69.8 million school

Keeping Up

Journalism is the ability to meet the challenge of filling space.—R. West.

bond referendum.

Property tax values will drop 1.2 percent in St. Paul from 1991 to 1992, possibly imperiling government services.

A three-judge federal court issued an order invalidating a redistricting plan approved by a state court panel that had generally followed a plan approved by the Legislature.

The Minnesota Racing Commission voted to permit wagering by telephone on horseraces at Canterbury Downs.

The Public Utilities Commission granted Northern States Power Co. a \$53.5 million annual increase for its electricity operations. The company had asked \$98.2 million.

Nashwauk and Chatfield voters turned down proposals for Sunday liquor. Chatfield voters approved

holding local elections in conjunction with state elections. Voters in both Fairmont and Island View approved Sunday liquor. Worthington School District voters approved a \$650,000 excess levy referendum. Willmar School District voters defeated a \$23.9 million bond issue. Litchfield School District voters turned down a \$10.5 million bond issue for a new high school. Aitkin voters rejected a \$250,000 bond for a new library.

Technical colleges in Mankato and Albert Lea will merge. Hibbing School Board approved an interim merger agreement between the Hibbing and Eveleth Technical Colleges.

Fairview Milaca Hospital in Milaca ended all but its outpatient services. Paynesville hospital officials proposed a hospital district for 14 nearby cities and towns.

Blue Earth County and the City of Mankato agreed to seek necessary

legislation to merge their sheriff and police departments.

Mankato officials agreed to turn the Mankato Municipal Airport into a regional facility.

More than 560 Albany School District residents signed a petition seeking removal of three school board members and reinstatement of the suspended superintendent.

Margaret Preska resigned as president of Mankato State University. James Denn, deputy commissioner of Labor and Industry and former president of the Minnesota Trucking Association, was appointed commissioner of the Department of Transportation by Gov. Carlson. St. Paul Police Chief William McCutcheon will not be reappointed, Mayor Jim Scheibel announced. Sen. Donald Storm, IR-Edina, was appointed by Gov. Carlson to the Public Utilities Commission. Rep. Ken Nelson, DFL-Minneapolis, said he will not seek reelection next year. The Community College Board named Sally Inne president of the Clearwater Community College Region.

Changing the basis for competition

Jan Malcolm, vice president, Group Health, at Citizens League meeting Dec. 3.

I think you'll hear a certain amount of similarity in what the HMO Council's proposal is to those prior presentations (by Mary Jo O'Brien, Page 2, and Bob Johnson, Page 3). And I think that...bodes very well for the debate next session and for the prospect of something actually happening...

Today the industry competes over avoidance of risk rather than over management of care to a large degree...Our proposal (seeks to) restructure the competitive environment and create rules and playing fields whereby we are indeed competing over cost and quality management and not over risk aversion...

A very key difference between the Insurance Federation and the HMO proposal...is that...we would continue to compress (variations in rates) over time in the small-group

market down to community ratings...Community rating is our ultimate goal...I think it's one of the important public-policy debates and differences that we have in this whole issue...I have yet to hear anyone make a cogent policy argument for why we should structure health-care premiums differently by age, sex and health data...

We need to have a basic benefit package out there in the market that everyone should be able to buy and all carriers should be required to offer...

We believe very strongly as does the business community that cost-containment is even a more important issue for guaranteeing access to care than insurance practices...

We talk a lot in our proposal about the need to move forward on development of medical-care protocols and outcomes measurements and standards...We are...leery of any system which would have the state be the final arbiter of

care protocols...There's a wide degree of agreement now in our community that the way we are using technology and deploying technology is perhaps not operating in the community's interest. Administrative reform is another key element of our cost-containment proposals...We ought to be able to...come up with common claim forms, common provider-coding schemes, common referral forms...

We propose...to subsidize premiums for everyone in the state under 200 percent of the poverty level...whether they are today insured or not...We propose to use the same kind of sliding fee schedule that the Access Commission came up with to cap the out-of-pocket expenses...We propose to fund the subsidies and also the reinsurance mechanism...by placing a...6 percent surcharge on all inpatient services...The most progressive (source of funding) would be an income-tax-related source. We just...don't think that's...politically feasible.



Citizens League Matters

December 17, 1991

News for Citizens League Members

Welcome new members

•Deborah Allan
•Bonnie Anderson
•Richard Bonine
•Joe Boston
•Dionne Colvin
•Laura Crosby
•Ellen Breyer
•Patrick Dale
•David Davis
•Alyssa De Pesa
•Bridget Des Lauriers
•Barbara Dols
•Kenneth Dols
•Dana Evans
•Ruth Faunce
•Elizabeth Fedor
•Richard Ferguson
•Philip Gelbach
•Susan Gilgenbach
•Nancy Gronbeck
•Dorothea Guiney
•Jean Hammink
•Mary Jodeit
•Suzanne Kennedy
•Michael Levine
•Jim Maahs
•Natalie Madgy
•Melissa Marks
•Warren Maul
•Michael Modak
•Mike Moser
•Gerald Nolte
•David Pace
•Judith Pinke
•Mark Pilon
•Susan Rousseau
•Randy Schubring
•L.C. Schultz
•Lawrence Simmons
•Barbara Spannaus
•James Stensvold
•Leo Stern
•Mrs. Leo Stern
•Gerald Tietz
•Lawrence Wackett
•Stephen Weisberg
•Mrs. Stephen Weisberg

Committee approves a report on AIDS virus testing

Report says: Test only those health care workers at risk of carrying the virus

The Community Information Committee (CIC), the standing committee charged with implementing League reports, on Nov. 22 approved a subcommittee report on the testing of doctors and other health-care workers for the AIDS virus (HIV). The Board of Directors was expected to review and act on the report at its

Committee focuses on health care access and costs

The CIC recently established a health care subcommittee to prepare for the debate expected during the 1992 legislative session on health care access and costs. Chaired by Bill Johnstone, a member of the League's Board of Directors and a lawyer with the Dorsey & Whitney firm, the subcommittee is concerned with two fundamental issues: providing health care coverage for persons without insurance, and containing the uncontrolled costs that typify the health care system today.

Members of the subcommittee are: John Brandl, John Costello, Buzz Cummins, Ginny Greenman, Curt Johnson, Verne Johnson, Steve Kelley, Ted Kolderie, Scheffer Lang, Tony Morley, Harry Sutton, and Barbara Van Drasek. The committee has been meeting weekly and will continue to do so through January.

next meeting. Among other recommendations, the report recommends voluntary testing of all health-care workers who are reasonably at risk of carrying the virus. These workers are those who have engaged in personal behavior that could put themselves at risk for contracting the HIV virus or have had an occupational blood exposure or exchange from a patient since 1980.

The report recommends against testing all health-care workers or only those who do exposure-prone procedures because: so few of them are at risk of having HIV, the patient's risk of transmission is

infinitesimal, and even daily testing would not prevent risk of infection. Furthermore, a better way to protect the public from contracting HIV, according to the report, is universal infection control procedures.

At one of its first meetings in the fall of 1991, the CIC, co-chaired by Ellen Brown and Jean King, created the AIDS subcommittee to address the issues of mandatory testing of health care workers and disclosure of HIV status. The subcommittee updated the work done in 1987 and 1988 by a League committee on the legal issues of AIDS.

AIDS subcommittee relied on past work

The AIDS subcommittee of the CIC relied on the work of the 1988 League report *Legal Issues of AIDS*, as well as the expertise of two resource persons: Mike Moen, director of the Division of Disease Prevention and Control at the Minnesota Department of Health, and Steve Kelley, member of the Board of Medical Practice.

Several members of the 1988 study committee also served on this subcommittee, including Jane Vanderpoel who chaired the subcommittee. Other subcommittee members were: Charles Backstrom, Ellen Brown, Doug Carnival, Jeff Hazen, Deb Osgood, David Piper, John Stone, and Tom Swain.

Guthrie Theater offers special rates

Citizens League members are eligible for a special 25 percent discount on tickets for the Guthrie Theater production MARAT/SADE by Peter Weiss, directed by Garland Wright. The discount is available for four dates in January: Saturday, Jan. 11 at 8:00 p.m.; Sunday Jan. 12 at 7:00 p.m.;

Tuesday, Jan. 14 at 7:30 p.m.; and Wednesday, Jan. 15 at 7:30 p.m.

To order tickets at this special rate, call the Guthrie Ticket Office at 377-2224; advise the reservationist that you are a Citizens League member and quote the price code "AW."

League presents position on property tax relief

The Citizens League joined the Minnesota Taxpayers Association, the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, and the Minnesota Business Partnership to express common views on state-paid property tax relief to the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (ACIR) in December. The ACIR, composed of legislators and local government officials and created by the 1991 Legislature to devise a system for distributing state-provided aid, invited the League and other organizations to discuss the goals that should guide property-tax relief.

The collective statement

Baumgarten on health care panel

On Friday, December 6, **Allan Baumgarten**, associate director of the Citizens League, participated on a health-care access panel. Baumgarten joined state Rep. Paul Ogren, DFL-Aitkin, on the panel before the annual assembly of the Minnesota Social Service Association at

emphasized the overall goal of an accountable state/local fiscal system. One important feature of such a system is reducing the disparities that cause some types of property to bear far greater tax burdens

The emphasis should be on aiding individuals based on their need.

than others: this can be done most effectively by targeting the state aid for property tax relief to those individuals most in need of assistance.

Furthermore, the statement recommended replacing the

current inequitable local government aid (LGA) program with a formula that distributes aid to local units based on needs that can be explicitly defined, not related to how much cities spend.

The statement argued that in times of scarcity, the state may well be justified to spend more of its resources on education or health care or other needs than on property tax relief.

In addition, the statement recommended moving away from the state's system of classifying property by type for taxation purposes.

Forum set on health care values

The University of Minnesota's Center for Biomedical Ethics is sponsoring a Jan. 17 symposium to present a framework of values to guide Minnesota's health care reform. The symposium runs from 8:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Humphrey Institute on the University campus and costs \$30. To register or for more information call the Center at 625-4917.

Make an end-of-year contribution

At the beginning of December, each of you as members of the Citizens League received a letter from out-going executive director Curt Johnson asking for an end-of-the-year contribution to the League. Please take the opportunity to give generously. The League needs and depends on these year-end contributions from its members to meet its budget.

We hope to continue the trend established recently of depending more and more heavily for resources on individual members less on the volatile world of corporate and philanthropic grants. Show your interest and support for public affairs research and education by contributing to the Citizens League during this holiday season. Thank you for your ongoing help.

League planning Feb. celebration

The League's Marketing and Communications Committee, chaired by Board member **Jane Gregerson**, is planning an event in commemoration of the Citizens League's 40th anniversary.

In addition to celebrating the League's past, the event will honor the work of **Curt Johnson** and **Steve Alnes**. Johnson stepped down as executive director on December 1, after leading the organization for the past 11 years. Alnes is resigning as editor of the *Minnesota Journal*, having served in that position for the past eight years. We'll also use the occasion to officially welcome **Lyle Wray** as the League's new executive director.

Officially, the League's 40th birthday falls on February 14th. The event is planned for an evening during the week of February 17th. It will likely be held at the Town & Country Club in St. Paul. All League members will be invited to attend. In January you will receive an invitation with further details.

Cooperate

Continued from Page 1

door-catching and data processing (snowplowing and waste recycling).

"Things are occurring because of market forces and just because they make sense," said Bill Barnhart, government relations representative for Minneapolis. Barnhart is a member of an Association of Metropolitan Municipalities committee looking at new ways of service delivery and governance.

Examples of studies and proposals now on the table:

- Blue Earth County and the Mankato City Council voted unanimously in September to take steps to merge the county sheriff and city police forces.

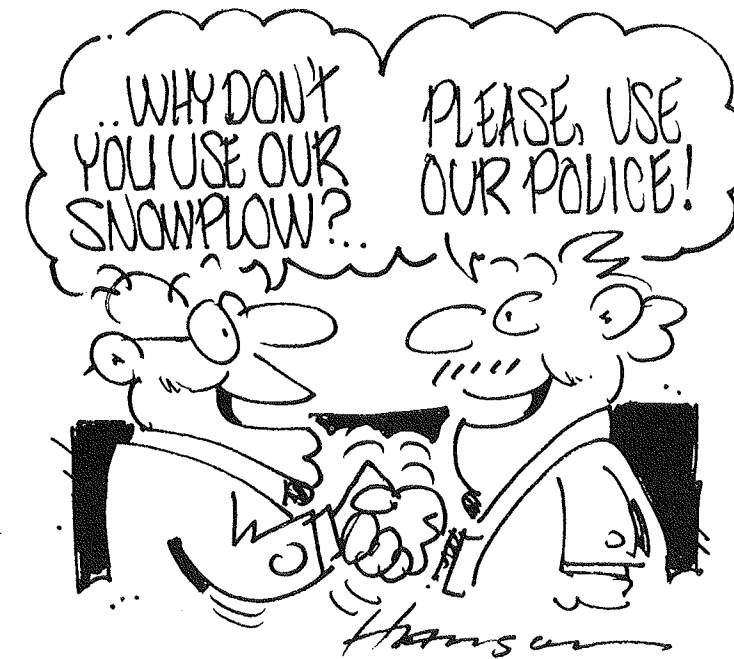
- Northwest Ramsey County suburbs Arden Hills, Mounds View, New Brighton, Shoreview and St. Anthony Village are looking at cooperative delivery of services. One possibility mentioned by the group is a multi-county public safety administrative support agency to handle specialized activities. Smaller patrol departments would handle neighborhood and community-based services.

- Roseville and Falcon Heights have been studying the merits of consolidation or increased sharing of services. Roseville now provides police service in Falcon Heights, and has a contract to provide city management services in Lauderdale.

- Preliminary proposals from the Ramsey County Local Government Services Study Commission include the merger of city and county health and library services, a new county environmental authority to handle surface water and natural resource management, and a countywide agency to handle specialized police services such as communications, crime lab and SWAT teams, and some joint purchasing.

- Gov. Arne Carlson has charged a Commission on Reform and Efficiency in Government (CORE) with finding new ways for government to do things better for less.

- The Citizens League has just launched its own study with a committee on Organization of Local Government Services: Goals



and Structures.

- Rep. Phyllis Kahn, DFL-Minneapolis, shook up county officialdom by suggesting that 87 counties may be too many. As few as 10 might be more efficient, she thinks. The state's 87 counties now range in size from smaller counties such as Cook (pop. 3,868); Lake of the Woods (4,076); Traverse (4,463) and Red Lake (4,525) to Hennepin, the largest (pop. 1,032,431).

- The Metropolitan Council has asked opinion leaders what the Council's role should be in promoting greater governmental efficiency in the metro area. Among the suggestions: Serve as an information clearinghouse and provide local and national models and examples of service sharing; serve as a facilitator of cooperative efforts among cities, and identify and work on new or emerging "larger-than-local" issues such as fire services.

Questions for these study groups: How much can government do? Over the years, has government tried to solve too many problems and built too many layers of bureaucracies we can't afford? Which unit of government should do what? What is the best size of governmental unit for delivering a particular service? Is consolidation of some of the state's more than 3,500 local governments (includ-

ing 855 municipalities, 441 school districts and 87 counties) the way to go for efficiency and cost savings?

Services most frequently mentioned for consolidation or centralization include: public safety, including police and fire; purchasing; parks; solid waste; surface-water management; libraries and radio communications.

Already the debate is intense over pros and cons of proposed reforms. Are there economies of scale and better services with larger units of government? Yes, is the growing consensus, for specialized services such as police bomb squads and SWAT teams. But there is disagreement as to whether or not there is more or less accountability or better communications or better trained and more professional staffs in bigger units.

James Mulder, executive director of the Association of Minnesota Counties, said there's no guarantee of cost savings with fewer counties. "In fact, it might cost more," he warned.

Rep. Kelly believes ultimately that some consolidations and centralization will bring savings and better services.

The Roseville/Falcon Heights study found that consolidating the

two suburbs would save only about \$5 per household per year. Given that low saving, the idea could be hard to sell to the 5,328 residents of Falcon Heights. They might fear losing their community identity in light of Roseville's 33,382 population.

There are other hitches in overhauling what Gov. Carlson calls the state's horse-and-buggy government systems.

Labor contracts become a disincentive. For example, merging the Ramsey County and St. Paul health services runs into the problem of different employee pay scales.

Organized labor also is apprehensive that reform proposals will result in a loss of jobs.

Competition for tax base is a barrier. Rural Minnesota legislators are wary of any initiatives they fear would allow a land grab by cities at the expense of townships in their districts.

Twin Cities suburbs fear that Minneapolis and St. Paul are eyeing mergers and consolidations of services as a way to get suburbs to pick up some of their tax bills.

Different communities have different values. One might want to spend more for police, for instance; another might want more parks and playgrounds.

"Unigov," the consolidation of part-time suburban city councils and staffs, could result in a bureaucratic maze of departments, governed by highly paid and full-time elected officials who are farther from, rather than closer to, their citizen constituents, said a report by the Northwest Ramsey study group.

"In the suburban areas, city government works because we elect our friends and neighbors to serve us...(to) represent the interest of... neighborhoods," it said.

Consultant Peter Hutchinson summed it up succinctly: Government has to look at citizens as customers and treat them like customers. Working under set rules fashioned 50 years ago is hamstringing that kind of consumer-targeted government, he declared.

Betty Wilson, retired political writer for the Star Tribune, is a freelance writer.

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Contradictions ride on light-rail testimony

The Metropolitan Council heard some contradictory testimony about light-rail transit (LRT) earlier this month, although the folks were all testifying in favor of it. Hennepin County Commissioner John Derus argued that the Twin Cities should build light rail (among other reasons) in order to get its share of federal transit aid.

But Ramsey County Commissioner John Finley said the area should "move ahead" and build the first proposed LRT project, joining downtown Minneapolis, the University of Minnesota and downtown St. Paul, without federal money, because the "red tape" and "delays" that accompany federal aid mean the area "will come out in the hole" if it waits for Washington.

And, while Finley said the project would take "30,000 cars" off the road at "prime congestion time," Mike Ehrlichmann, executive director of the Regional Transit Board, said the downtown-to-downtown route is a good choice because it links the metro area's

three largest traffic generators, even though it would attract mostly bus riders, and relatively few new riders—people now in cars. That ridership projection should not be used to "penalize" the route by continuing to rely solely on buses there, Ehrlichmann said. —Pete Vanderpoel.

Mankato and North Mankato are talking about the possibility of sharing the tax benefits derived from new industry that develops in either city. North Mankato Council Member Pat Kelly introduced the idea at a joint session of the two city councils, and it's still just an idea.

It sounds, however, much like the Fiscal Disparities Act under which, beginning in 1971, local governments in the Twin Cities metropolitan have shared 40 per-

cent of the commercial-industrial tax-base growth. —Stephen Alnes.

A group of citizens in the St. Cloud area has been working over the past two years, in a project called Community 2000, to identify critical problems that aren't receiving adequate attention in their communities. They surveyed residents and then formed six citizen action teams to investigate issues affecting the St. Cloud area, including transportation, intergovernmental cooperation and crime and drugs.

One result has been a recommendation to create a citizens advisory board patterned after the Citizens League in the Twin Cities. Efforts are now under way to organize this citizens advisory board, which would be nonpartisan and open to anyone interested. It would conduct independent studies on matters concerning the area and provide a forum for citizen discussions of these issues. —Jody A. Hauer.

It was surprising that folks treated one of the findings in a recent House Research study as surprising. The finding is that only about 25 percent of full-time community college students in Minnesota transfer to a four-year school and get a bachelor's degree.

That doesn't seem particularly noteworthy, inasmuch as we've long known that (1) many students

plan on only a two-year degree and do not intend to transfer and (2) a higher percentage of Minnesota four-year students than in a number of other states is allowed—and in some cases, encouraged—to start out not in community colleges, but in the state universities or University of Minnesota, both of which are more expensive for taxpayers. —P.V.

In November, the Minnesota Comprehensive Health Association (MCHA) got a head start on 1992. MCHA sells health insurance to about 30,000 Minnesotans rejected by private insurers or who are eligible for other reasons. To get ready for anticipated 1992 losses, MCHA imposed an assessment of \$25 million on the health-plan companies required by law to cover the plan's losses: health-maintenance organizations, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota and indemnity insurers.

The assessment is based on each company's proportionate share of insured premium volume. The premium base that supports MCHA is growing much slower than almost anything else in health care. In 1990, a year in which many employers reported health insurance premium increases of 15 and 20 percent, the cumulative premium base grew by only 9.3 percent. One reason for that relatively slow growth is that more employers are turning to self-insurance and leaving the pool of MCHA supporters. The MCHA assessment now amounts to more than 1 percent of premiums. —Allan Baumgarten.

'Logically inconsistent'

Randy Johnson, Hennepin County commissioner, at Citizens League meeting Nov. 12.

Most of the professional and medical trade associations...opposing mandatory HIV testing of any health-care workers are logically inconsistent in presenting their case...Most...have concluded, first, health-care workers should know their own HIV status and, second, health-care workers who test HIV positive should not perform at least certain procedures...If you conclude...at least certain health-care workers should know their own HIV status, there's only way of doing that, and that's through testing...

Second, (most of them conclude) that if (workers) test HIV positive, there are certain procedures (they) shouldn't perform. There's an inescapable third logical step. And that's (that) certain health-care workers should be tested on a required periodic basis in order to prevent them from performing whatever these procedures are that these groups say they shouldn't be performing...

Another logical inconsistency here

...is the fact that we're told over and over again by these same groups that the blood supply in this country is HIV-free and it's safe. And yet it's the same test with the same (time lag between contracting the virus and its appearance in a test) ...So it seems that the test is good if you want people to believe something; the test is not worthwhile if you really don't want mandatory testing...

Another argument that's been frequently advanced is that the cost of testing health-care workers is simply too great...But we have to look at what these costs really are. When the Hennepin County AIDS task force looked at what the cost would be at our medical center, they started at one end where all health-care workers would be tested twice a year. That would affect about 4,800 of our Hennepin County employees and some other contract vendors. That would cost about \$440,000. At the other end, if we look at testing only health-care workers who perform invasive, exposure-prone procedures, we're looking at a cost of about \$18,000 a year, and about 200 employees would be subject to that kind of testing.

Take Note

Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more. —W. Shakespeare.

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