Fiscal disparities pool shrinks again, after C-I tax cuts

by Dana Schroeder

Now in its 25th year of operation, the Twin Cities area tax-base sharing program, widely known as the "fiscal disparities" program, once again faces a shrinking pool of commercial-industrial (C-I) tax base to redistribute among metro-communities. This year's regionwide pool is $252,545,903, down by 4.4 percent from last year's pool of $264.2 million. This is the second year in a row the pool has declined, after increasing for the previous two years.

The Citizens League's 25th annual tax-base sharing analysis shows that the shared fiscal disparities pool fell at an even higher rate in 1999—4.4 percent—than the four percent it had dropped in 1998.

The Twin Cities tax-base sharing program currently redistributes over 27.5 percent of the area's commercial-industrial (C-I) tax base among metro-area communities. Every community puts 40 percent of its growth in C-I tax base since 1971 into a regionwide pool. Every community (except Sunfish Lake, which is ineligible, since it does not allow C-I development) then receive back tax base from the regionwide pool, based on its relative shares of population and tax base. (See "How fiscal disparities works" on page 4.)

The program, which has generated interest from around the country, has been controversial from the start. Passed in 1971, court challenges upheld its implementation until 1975. Since then, there have been a number of legislative attempts to weaken the program or to expand it to include residential property.

Now in its second year, the Iron Range tax-base sharing program—modeled after its Twin Cities cousin, both in concept and controversy—provides for sharing 40 percent of C-I tax-base growth, with 1995 as the base year, rather than 1971. The area covered by the program is the Iron Range taconite tax-relief area, which includes all or part of seven counties in north-central and northeastern Minnesota. In its second year the shared pool increased by 2.1 percent to $450,078, or about 1.3 percent of the Range's C-I tax base. (See "Tax-base sharing on the Range" on page 6.)

Shared pool declines

The region's total tax base—from all types of property—also declined over the past year, dropping by $64.6 million to $2.286 billion. This decline, too, was due to a lowering of various class rates, not just C-I.

Continued on page 4

Crisis in financing health education could cut access

by Frank B. Cerra

A quiet crisis is looming in Minnesota, one that could potentially reduce health-care access in communities across the state and jeopardize the ability of the University of Minnesota to maintain the research enterprise that has been an economic development cornerstone for decades.

You haven't heard much about it recently, but you will hear about it during this year's legislative session. It is the question of how we finance the education of future physicians, pharmacists, dentists and nurses. It is a national problem that has crept up quickly and is of particular interest to the University, as we educate upwards of two-thirds of Minnesota health professionals.

Let me step back for a minute and explain what has caused this serious situation. Several major forces continue to reshape American health care, significantly affecting the ability of universities to offer high quality health professional education. These factors, generally outside the control of the University, include reduced federal funding, declining patient-care revenues and changing expectations for health sciences students and faculty. Simply put, educational revenues are declining dramatically and costs are increasing—a deadly combination, considering the growing need for health professionals to serve an aging and increasingly diverse Minnesota population.

Medical education has traditionally been funded from four sources: 1) the federal government through Medicare, 2) the state, 3) faculty who generate patient-care revenue, and 4) students. Minnesota hospitals, clinics and health providers also provide pro bono support estimated to be $45 million per year to train and mentor students and residents.

Now, two sources of income—federal funds for resident training and faculty-generated patient-care revenues—are diminishing. The pro bono contributions are also in question, as providers attempt to manage costs and still support medical education.

Continued on page 2
Continued from page 1

We are especially concerned about the embryonic stage of medical education, a crucial early step in trainees' class-research capabilities as faculty struggle to balance education, research, outreach and patient-care responsibilities. There are only so many hours in the day, and when faculty must work harder to generate patient-care revenue, there is less time for the kinds of research that can lead to improvements in patient care. The challenge is coming at a time when the National Institutes of Health has increased its funding by 15 percent, or $2 billion. We Continued on page 3

Precious little time in the hospital for the educational process to occur. After the patient is discharged, the care continues on an outpatient basis. Students and the residents involved often treat the patient more than once during their clinic time when they visited the hospital.

The final challenge, which drives up costs, is to arm our graduates with knowledge and skills that are no longer unknown a generation ago. They must understand and manage technology, government programs, ethical dilemmas, health care, community medicine, biomedicine, genomic discoveries, new products and devices, gene therapies and new drugs and treatments. This is a tough task, but one we must pursue to assure that Minnesota has the property trained health professionals.

Our best hope is for Minnesota to establish a new public-private partnership to meet this challenge. We must continue to advocate for federal support; we will ask the state's taxpayers to increase their investment to assure adequate numbers of health professionals in our communities; we will seek additional support for faculty who generate patient-care revenue in a manner that also facilitates research; and we will assure continued access to the health professions for all students.

On the private side, we will encourage the providers to continue their important pro bono support, despite increasing financial pressures to reduce housing and education. And I firmly believe the insurance companies must become partners by stepping up and sharing the cost of educating health professionals. They benefit—as we all do—from the public value of quality health care. Their involvement will be the final piece in the health education puzzle.
Impact of shrinking pool

As the pool shrinks, of course, communities dependent on fiscal disparities for a significant share of their tax base will have to place more of the tax burden on other types of property.

Given the quirks in the way the program is implemented, next year could offer even a bigger blow to this community because significant amounts of money through the tax-base sharing program. According to the seven-county Metropolitan Council of the Minnesota House Research Department, the C-I values on which tax-base share payments have already been turned out, unless any further class rate breaks are given in the 1999 session.

Because of the way the area-wide tax rate assessed against the C-I property in the pool is figured, higher property taxes paid by the pool will likely not be as high next year, leaving a greater tax, burden on property owners. In anticipation of this problem, Hinze said the Legislature has funded a special $3.5 million Fiscal Disparities Credit Aid to help replace the fiscal disparities distribution in areas that will feel the biggest blow.

Net losers, gainers

Over three-quarters of the 186 metro-area communities are net losers under the program. 142 received more tax base from the shared pool this year than they contributed to the state's shared C-I tax base, the pool continued to shrink. (See Why did the fiscal disparities pool shrunk? on page 6)

Net loser last year and a net gainer the three previous years, its net gain this year was small—$25.3 thousand, or 9.4 percent of the net shared tax base.gainers. Minneapolis shared tax base ($113.4 million) is more than twice as large as Bloomington's, its closest competitor, and nearly three times as large as third place, St. Paul.

Because of its large C-I base, Minneapolis made the largest contribution of any community to the shared tax base—$40.1 million, or about 16 percent of the total shared tax base. While it also returned the largest amount of tax base to the pool—$40.2 million, or 16 percent—it net gain was only $1.7 million, or about one-tenth of a percent of its property tax base.

The situation was different for Minnetonka, even though it regressed its status as a net gainer. It had been a net loser last year and a net gainer the three previous years, its net gain this year was small—$13,900, or 6.0 percent of the 14 largest net-I tax gainer. Minnetonka's large C-I tax base ($171.4 million) is more than twice as large as Bloomington's, its closest competitor, and nearly three times as large as third place, St. Paul.

Bloomington, $17.9 million; Eden Prairie, $8.8 million; Minnetonka, $8.8 million; Plymouth, $4.2 million; and Golden Valley, $2.6 million.

The top four net contributors are also the top four on a per capita basis, ranging from Bloomington in first place at $205 per capita to Farmington in fourth place at $142. Edina ranked seventh in per capita contributions at $8.8 million; St. Paul, third place at $7.9 million and Woodland the lowest ($35). The top five last year. Edina bumped Eagan to sixth place this year, unlike last year. The other new net gainer was a city new to the over 9,000 population group of cities, Farmington.

St. Paul was once again the top net gainer under the program, with a net gain of $25.3 million in tax base, down from $28.2 million last year. On a percentage basis, St. Paul's tax base increased by 17.3 percent due to sharing, or sixth highest among the 40 large C-I net gainers. Even more dramatically, the tax base increased St. Paul's C-I tax base by 40.5 percent.

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Disparities

Continued from page 5

The wealthiest five cities over 9,000 population before sharing remain in the top five after sharing; the poorest five cities before sharing remain among the bottom eight after sharing.

Tax Impact

It’s important to note that tax-sharing is only one part—by no means the most significant part—of a complex state strategy for equalizing revenue-raising capacity among communities. State aid is by far the most important; state-paid local government aid and disparities aid did also play a part. Tax-sharing is the only part.

Continued on page 7

**TWIN CITIES TAX-BASE SHARING BY COUNTIES, 1999**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Total NTC</th>
<th>Fiscal Year 1999 Disposition</th>
<th>Net gain or loss</th>
<th>NTC after sharing</th>
<th>% change in NTC after sharing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anoka</td>
<td>$193,236,340</td>
<td>$106,245,767</td>
<td>$1,108,573</td>
<td>$190,344,914</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carver</td>
<td>$157,685,668</td>
<td>$88,922,744</td>
<td>$3,486,617</td>
<td>$151,409,351</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dakota</td>
<td>$309,110,141</td>
<td>$178,237,461</td>
<td>$4,380,864</td>
<td>$312,518,025</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hennepin</td>
<td>$206,192,324</td>
<td>$114,305,078</td>
<td>$1,486,532</td>
<td>$207,591,610</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramsey</td>
<td>$141,447,574</td>
<td>$79,110,000</td>
<td>$1,965,502</td>
<td>$143,375,502</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott</td>
<td>$82,140,701</td>
<td>$46,154,214</td>
<td>$1,704,307</td>
<td>$83,848,521</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>$153,223,707</td>
<td>$84,305,648</td>
<td>$6,395,105</td>
<td>$159,618,812</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>$2,727,891,561</td>
<td>$516,981,943</td>
<td>$15,354,903</td>
<td>$2,572,536,658</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** See notes on table on page 7.

**TAX-BASE SHARING on the Range**

The Iron Range tax-base sharing program, established by the 1996 Legislature, is in its second year of operation. Patterned after the metro-area program, it provides for sharing 40 percent of the C-I tax-base growth since 1995 throughout the Range’s seven counties. The Range area includes all of Lake and Cook Counties, much of St. Louis (excluding Duluth) and Itasca Counties and portions of Aitkin, Crow Wing and Koochiching Counties.

The program has been without controversy, largely because the taxes on the west sides of the Range debar- ing the fairness and benefits of both the tax-base sharing pool and the long-standing taconite tax-relief program. That program shares produc-


tion taxes paid by taconite producers among the counties on the Range, in lieu of property taxes on taconite facilities. Despite at least one proposal, no changes have been made to the program.

In 1999 the Range tax-base sharing program has a shared tax-base pool of 450,707, or an increase of two percent over the previous year’s pool. That amounts to about 1.3 percent of the area’s C-I tax-base of $33.5 billion. On a county basis, three of the seven counties involved in the controversy, legislators say, were net losers in the tax-base sharing pool. Lake County was the biggest net loser, with a net contribution of $796,618. Cook County was net of a net contribution of $14,959, and Crow Wing County was third, with a net contribution of $632.

A few months earlier, the Range program had scattered taconite producers among the counties on the Range, in lieu of property taxes on taconite facilities. Despite at least one proposal, no changes have been made to the program.

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In a change from last year, Itasca County, which had been a net loser, became the program’s biggest winner this year, with a net gain in tax-base of $4,770,707, fol-


gained by St. Louis County, at $42,591. Koochiching was a tiny win-


er, pulling in a net gain of $88,767. Thus, a city or county is a net 


Looking at individual communi-


ties, Virginia was easily the largest net gainer, with a net gain of tax-base of $35,012, followed by Eveleth, $20,484; Grand Rapids, $16,697; Mt. Iron, $10,932; and Silver Bay, $8,433.

The top five net losers in tax base were Two Harbors, with a net loss in tax base of $2,917; $44,353; Beaver Bay Twp., $16,126; Silver Creek Township, $11,056; Lake Unorganized, $10,254.

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Virginia school district pays up on graduate warranty

Make sure you keep the receipt. In previous reports, the Citizens League has said that K-12 schools should be held financially accountable for any remedial education that takes place after high school graduation. Virginia is going one big step further and considering implementation of this notion on a statewide basis.

The impetus for such action is modeled on a program in the Hanover County public schools. The District provides every graduate with a C average a two-year warranty; if an employer or higher education institution finds that remedial work is needed, the district will pick up the cost of additional courses.

One qualification: Hanover is a relatively affluent suburb of Richmond, Virginia, and student achievement in the district is high. But since 1994, the district has paid 14 claims averaging $400.
—Ron Wirtz

The national map of population growth is a dead ringer for the national map of temperature—the one showing that huge bowl of cold dropping from Montana south through Missouri and northeast up to New England. All the growing states lie south of that line: the famous “sunbelt.”

All but one. Confounding everything, smack at the top of the coldest part of that no-growth bowl, is a state that has been growing steadily: Minnesota.

This is not because a lot of people think it’s fun to ski on flat land. It’s because over a long period of time private action and public policy have combined to build here a metropolitan area in which people really want to live—cold or not.
—Ted Kolderie

Continental divide. From 1995-96 to 1996-97, a total of 29 states saw their poverty rates decrease and 21 states experienced a poverty rate increase. In Minnesota, the percentage of people in poverty increased by 0.2 percent.

What’s perhaps most curious about the trend is its geographical layout. Of the 26 states east of the Mississippi River, 73 percent (19 states) saw their poverty rates decline or stay the same, compared with only 42 percent (10 states) of the 24 states west of the big river.—R.W.

The dog ate my comprehensive plan. When the clock struck 1999, more than a 130 local communities in the Twin Cities region were under legislative mandate to have completed their comprehensive plans for future community growth and development.

According to the Metropolitan Council, only about 30 communities met the deadline, while more than 100 had to ask for extensions to submit their plan sometime in the coming year. The Council noted, “In many cases, the public participation process has taken longer than communities anticipated.”—R.W.

Shotgun, anyone? Over the last three-and-a-half decades, teenage pregnancies have declined more than 10 percent nationwide and the rate of pregnancy among teens has dropped even more.

But while total teen births from 1960 to 1996 have declined by 50,000, births to unmarried teens has negated any gains and arguably created much more difficult problems. From 1960 to 1996, births to unmarried teenagers increased more than 400 percent, from 87,000 to 376,000. In 1960, only 16 percent of births to teens were nonmarital; by 1996, that figure had skyrocketed to 76 percent.—R.W.

Every so often something creates just that little doubt about that push to “get kids’ test scores up.”

At South High in Minneapolis, apparently, almost all the remaining secondary vocational program have now disappeared. These are the “manual arts” programs that give kids something active to do. They have been cashed out to produce more English teachers, who will, hopefully, get kids to pass the reading tests.

Here and there a few folks do dissent from the orthodoxy about “standards,” warning that the push for “scores” will actually narrow the scope of what kids know and are able to do. We should maybe not ignore those voices entirely.—T.K.

One of the biggest local concerns over the Y2K bug concerns potential power outages during Minnesota’s freezing winters. But people in the southwestern part of the country won’t have to worry about the air conditioning turning off, thanks to the slow-moving nature of government.

The Hoover Dam is the major power supplier for southern California, Nevada, Colorado and Arizona, but Y2K will have virtually no impact on dam operations and power generation. Completed in the mid-1930s, dam operations were controlled for decades by manual switches. It was only in the 1980s that officials began debating computerization of the dam’s operation. It took more than a decade to create and approve a modernization plan and several more years to implement it. As a result, computers have been installed just within the last few years—all of which are already Y2K-proof.—R.W.

Milwaukee’s new superintendent of schools was pretty unhappy about voucher schools and charter schools taking students away from his district schools, when he spoke at Mankato State’s winter conference recently. Superintendent Alan Brown, in fact, described at some length his efforts to suppress both those options created by the state for students.

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When the Livable Communities Act passed in 1995, it was widely praised for finally addressing the affordable housing crisis in the Twin Cities. Not so fast, says a recent Center for Urban Studies report, because affordable housing goals in each community have failed to consider future population increases.

While the total number of affordable housing units in the metro region will increase in coming years, the report’s authors argue that population increases will prevent any relative increase in the supply of affordable housing. There will be more affordable units, they point out, but more people looking for them, as well.

They note that if Metropolitan Council population projections are met and if affordable housing goals are achieved by each community, the relative amount of affordable housing units (as a percentage of all units) would decrease by 12 percent over the next 15 years. The report adds that continuing the status quo would produce better results in increasing the affordable housing supply.—R.W.

“Take Note” contributors include Minnesota Journal and Citizens League staff members.
Welcome

New and returning members

Elizabeth Bergman
Terence Fruth
Phil Gersmehl
Debbie Gottel
Nancy and Seth Hoyt
James A. Klein
Marvin R. McNeff
Robert and Deborah Montgomery
Gen Olson
Jerry Podkopacz
Marianne Remedios
Beth Rice
John Roberts
Diane Sprague
Joe Sullivan
Eric Utne
Marcia Wattson
Katie White

Help Wanted:
Training Tomorrow’s Workforce

The League is sponsoring a half-day conference designed to increase public awareness about the importance of workforce training and to generate new ideas for redesigning the state’s workforce training system. In the recent report, Help Wanted: More Opportunities Than People, the League argued that it’s time to rethink the design and expected outcomes of training programs. This conference will showcase some innovative programs and bring together policy makers, business and community leaders, and social welfare advocates to hear from legislative leaders about where Minnesota is heading.

Friday, March 12 / 8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. / Sheraton Midway

Help Wanted: More Opportunities Than People
Steve Keefe, co-chair, will start the day with an overview of the League’s report.

Innovative Approaches from Elsewhere

- Arizona Industry Clusters
  Bob Breault, Chair, Greater Tucson Economic Council and CEO, Breault Optics Research, will discuss the relationship between industry clusters and workforce development in Tucson.

- Massachusetts “Skills Plus+”
  Paul Rezuke, Manager, Field Operations, Massachusetts Division of Employment & Training will discuss the “Skills Plus+” voucher program for welfare-to-work participants.

Breakout Sessions: Innovative Local Programs

Breakout #1 - Youth & At-Risk Students
- Anoka High School “Quality Center”
  Bill Mittlefehlidt, Quality Center Team Leader, and Greg Linder, Technical Training Specialist with Hoffman Enclosures, will discuss Anoka High’s school-to-work program.

- College of St. Catherine’s Access & Success
  Joan Demeules, Access and Success Coordinator, will outline the many on-campus and community-based resources offered to help single-parent students.

Breakout #2: Industry Collaborations
- Printing & Graphic Arts Advanced •
  Technical Education Center
  Raymond Bohn, Center Department Chair at Dunwoody Institute, and Monica Murphy, VP of Sales for Japs- Olson Co. will discuss the unique training partnership between the Printing Industry of MN and Dunwoody.

- MDES/MnSCU Skills Analysis Project •
  with the MN High Technology Association
  Dick Westerlund, MN High Technology Association Committee Chair and University College Client Manager, and Dan Faas, from the MN Dept. of Economic Security, will discuss an innovative new state program that helps businesses properly identify and match skill needs.

The Workforce Investment Act Challenges & Opportunities for Minnesota

Senator Roger Moe (DFL-Erskine), MN State Senate Majority Leader and Rep. Dan McElroy (R-Burnsville), Chair, House Jobs & Economic Development Finance Committee, will discuss current legislation relating to workforce development and training, and provide insights on redesigning worker training programs to produce better outcomes for workers and employers.

Special thanks to the conference sponsors listed on the other side.
$spending $marter

The February Mind-Opener series is looking at the different opportunities presented by the state's continued economic good fortune. Join us to find out how Minnesota can "spend smarter."

Tuesday, February 9
JOHN BRANDL
Dean, Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs

Mr. Brandl began the series by making the case for an overhaul of the state's tax and budget structure to minimize the impact of the ups and downs of economic cycles and to build quality, cost and equity into state programs.

Tuesday, February 16
JIM KOPPEL
Executive Director, Children's Defense Fund - MN

Mr. Koppel will discuss ways the state could spend or invest more money on various public programs.

Tuesday, February 23
REP. STEVE SVIGGUM (R-KENYON)
Speaker of the MN House of Representatives

Rep. Sviggum will give an overview of proposed tax cuts and reasons why this is the smartest way to "spend" money.

NEXT SERIES
New Visions for the Region

Governor Ventura has appointed leaders for most of the state departments and agencies that will shape the course of his administration. In March the League will feature some of those leaders and ask them to share their vision for the metropolitan region. Depending on timing and availability, we hope to hear from five of Ventura's new team: Metropolitan Council chair Ted Mondale, Health Commissioner Jan Malcolm, Human Services Commissioner Michael O'Keefe, State Planning Commissioner Dean Barkley and Transportation Commissioner Elwyn Tinklenberg. Dates, speakers and topics will be announced soon.