"...the supposed links between urban sprawl, highway construction, and congestion largely fade away on close examination. Or rather, the links persist, but in exactly the opposite way of what 'smart growth' advocates claim." See page 2.

**INSIDE**

Health care inaccessible for Latinos

Viewpoint: Serving students of color

Paying for public services as revenues decline

Take Note: Policy tidbits

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**Tax reform drains fiscal disparities pool**

by Phil Jenni

The 2001 property tax reforms appear to have had a dramatic effect on the metropolitan area's innovative tax-base sharing law, commonly referred to as fiscal disparities. The 2001 reforms reduced the region's net tax capacity by compressing the tax rates of various types of properties, particularly commercial industrial property. The result is a nearly 32 percent decline in the region's fiscal disparities pool, from $314,212,440 last year to $214,270,244 in 2002. The pool is redistributed each year among the 187 participating communities in the seven-county metropolitan area in an effort to reduce the disparities in commercial/industrial (C/I) tax base between those communities.

While the fiscal disparities pool declined, the impact is not as great as it seems because of other changes to the state tax code and by the state's takeover of education funding.

What is fiscal disparities?

The Minnesota Legislature passed the Twin Cities tax-base sharing law in 1971 and, after several court challenges, it was implemented in 1973. (More information on the history of the program can be found at [www.citizensleague.net](http://www.citizensleague.net).) The law requires cities in the metro area to contribute 40 percent of the growth in their C/I tax base since 1971 to a region-wide fiscal disparities pool. This tax base is then redistributed based on a formula that takes into account a city's population and the market value of all property in the jurisdiction.

The tax base put into the pool is taxed at a rate equal to the average metro tax rate and then the revenue generated by the pool is sent to each community according to the amount of tax base awarded to it. Since a portion of all C/I properties is taxed at a uniform regional rate, the tax burden on comparable pieces of C/I properties varies less from one jurisdiction to another than it otherwise would.

In addition to reducing the fiscal disparities between neighboring communities, tax-base sharing is intended to promote regional planning by ensuring that all metro communities benefit from valuable commercial industrial tax base. Proponents argue it discourages communities from competing against one another for development and encourages acceptance of development that generates less tax base but serves regional purposes, such as parks and nature preserves or affordable housing.

**This year's net gainer and net contributors**

All metropolitan communities pay into the pool and all receive a distribution from the pool. The net difference between the contribution and the distribution results in a net gain (getting out more than they contribute) or a net contribution (paying more in).

In our annual analysis of metro cities with populations over 9,000, the city of St. Paul was once again by far the biggest recipient of tax base sharing with a net gain of nearly $19 million. Minneapolis followed a distant second with a net gain of approximately $3.3 million.

Cottage Grove, South St. Paul and Coon Rapids round out the top five.

The top five cities with the largest net contribution to the tax-base sharing pool were Bloomington, Golden Valley, Minnetonka, Arden Hills and Roseville. The last two mark a slight shift from previous surveys in which the biggest net "losers" have all been communities in Hennepin County.

As in past years, Bloomington had the largest net loss, at about $14.5 million, which equals about 13.3 percent of the city's overall tax base.

www.citizensleague.net

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Tax reform continued on page 6
Editor's note: This the final article in an occasional series of stories exploring Minnesota’s changing populations, the challenges faced by new immigrants and the importance of immigration for the state and local communities. Other articles in the series may be viewed at www.citizensleague.net.

by Claudia Fuenters

For eight of the past 12 years, Minnesota has ranked last for the relative healthiness of the state’s population (America’s Health UnitedHealth Foundation State Health Rankings, Oct. 2001). Minnesota’s healthy reputation is in part due to its support of public health care. But mention this news to Latinos of Latin American origin. Most are unaware of it. But mention this news to Latinos of Latin American origin. Most are unaware of it. According to the state demographer, that is particularly troublesome for Minnesota’s Latinos: “The term Latino is used because it refers to people who are of Latin American origin, immigration status, health insurance and employment status; and number of years residing in the United States.” The researchers’ goal was to understand community members’ concerns, needs and knowledge of existing programs and services in an effort to improve health programs and services for Latinos. The key findings describe some of the underlying structures inherent in the Minnesota health care system that are particularly troublesome for some Latinos.

One of the primary barriers is the Latino population’s perception of the U.S. health care system. Latinos are young (average age 23) and the most despised ethnic population in the state. One-third reside in the urban core, behind in the suburbs and one-third in greater Minnesota. These residents represent a significant economic force with a collective buying power of $1.4 billion. They are also a prime workforce; the presence of the Latino workforce in the Twin Cities is critical to both the state’s (Region 9) result in estimated $121 million in additional tax revenue. Enrollment figures from school districts—both urban and rural—suggest that Latinos will continue to be a prime workforce.

Overview of Findings

The health care study was based on in-depth discussions with 11 focus groups of Latinos across the state. The focus group participants varied in age, sex, country of origin, immigration status, health insurance and employment status, and number of years residing in the United States. The findings were intended to understand community members’ needs, concerns, knowledge and understanding of existing programs and services in an effort to improve their health status and services. The key findings describe some of the underlying structures inherent in the Minnesota health care system that are particularly troublesome for some Latinos.

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Letters: Sprawling doesn’t equal congestion

I was interested to read Olar and O’Hara’s report on the results of the CIVC Congestion Study (12/29). However, I would like to take issue with some of their interpretations specifically their statement about “...urban sprawl, a strong contributing factor to congestion,” and their assertion that it is the result of families' first choice for reducing traffic congestion is the construction of more roads.

As I discussed at some length in my own Minnesota Journal article (9/18/01), the supposed links between urban sprawl, highway construction, and congestion largely fade away on close examination. Or rather, the links persist, but in exactly the opposite way of what “smart growth” advocates claim. In examining the 31 largest U.S. cities, I found that high-density urban area density is very strongly associated with higher congestion, not lower. And more highway miles per person was strongly associated with lower congestion.

I consider this comparison, Portland, Oregon maintained an urbanized area population density of about 3,000 per square mile between 1982 and 1999. They added no population, but greatly expanded the presence of the Latino workforce in the Twin Cities is critical to both the state’s (Region 9) result in estimated $121 million in additional tax revenue. Enrollment figures from school districts—both urban and rural—suggest that Latinos will continue to be a prime workforce.

Over the next 25 years, much of the growth in Minnesota’s youth population, those age 18 and under, will occur in the Latino and African-American communities, the same populations that our current educational system most often fails to reach, in either K-12 or post-secondary schools.

At the same time, society is raising the bar on the level of education needed to command a family wage. In order to enter the workforce the average family, an individual now needs 14 years of education, a high school diploma plus two years of additional education or training. Coming to terms with this reality repre- The Minneapolis Journal's top story was identified as the “most influential story” for the year by the Minneapolis Journal. The story was about the Minnesota Department of Health's efforts to improve health care for all Minnesota residents, with a focus on reducing health disparities between Minnesota's white population and communities of color. The story also highlighted the state's efforts to improve public health care systems and to address the issue of health insurance for persons or communities that are particularly troublesome for Minnesota's Latinos. The story was published in the Minnesota Journal on August 1, 2002.

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Getting Bessie down the stairs: declining revenue and rising spending breed trouble for state budget

by Duane Benson

You can lead a cow up a flight of stairs, but not back down. Cows legs simply don't work that way. I started thinking about this just the other day as I read through a recently completed report by the Minnesota Business Partnership, "Minnesota 1970-2020: Fifty years of state spending, personal income and demographic changes."

The report looks at several trends between 1970 and 2000 and makes some rough projections to see where they would lead us. As I looked at the numbers, I realized how effort it has been to increase state spending during an era of unparalleled economic growth. The trek upward has been as steady as a cow's gait. Yet, despite all the warnings we've had from demographers and economists, we have developed few mechanisms for a painless transition to a stagnant economy that is being reshaped by globalization and high-tech advancements. In other words, how will we get there? Rather, they are very simple extrapolations intended to raise questions about spending, personal income and demographic projections, how these trends appear sustainable, great!

If these trends appear sustainable, great! And fewer taxable goods. In other words, many Latinos do. They send us a book of all benefits and services that are available to us, but it's all in English. But what good is it to us if they send us all this information and they fill it with information that we can't understand.

The lack of comprehensible information leads many Latinos to disqualify themselves from insurance programs that they may be eligible for. These decisions are "based on information often shared by word-of-mouth, or on experiences they have had in other states."

Health continued from page 2

the health care system is difficult for many egalitarian of ethnic background; however, complicated administrative processes are doubly complex if a patient comes from a country that has socialized medicine, as many Latino immigrants do. Another common complaint is the lack of competent doctors. In some rural districts that can not pay because it was not an emergency. So I finally had to pay the bill in two payments. What happens if a patient goes to the doctor and says (at higher child gets 'na de mayo' and goes to the dentist in 2000, the situation is, and that the patient is worse. Ultimately, she is explaining to the many Latino immigrants. This is obvious that without cultural knowledge and understanding, there are wide disparities in the beliefs of provider and patient. What happens if a patient goes to the doctor and says (at higher child gets 'na de mayo' and goes to the dentist in 2000, the situation is, and that the patient is worse. Ultimately, she is explaining to the many Latino immigrants. This is obvious that without cultural knowledge and understanding, there are wide disparities in the beliefs of provider and patient.

State budget continued from page 4

2000-01. Two of these items, health care and aid to school districts, grew faster than the overall budget during the 1990s. Biennial increases averaged 21.3 percent and 18.3 percent, respectively. (It should be noted here that increases in aid to school districts don't necessarily translate to increased revenue for districts, and that broad spending trends don't always reflect what occurs within individual districts.) The third item, property tax aids and credits, averaged 3.1 percent annual growth rate. Project those trends out to 2020 and general fund spending on health care would hit $36 billion. Aid to school districts would approach $49 billion, and property tax aids and credits would exceed $4 billion. Together these three items alone would total $79 billion, or about 92 percent of the projected $85 billion biennial budget. Obviously something's wrong here. These three line items couldn't actually consume nine out of every ten dollars the state spends in 2000-21. But what is going to change to keep that from happening? Will a competitive, global economy force Minnesota to simply raise taxes high enough to compensate for an escalating tax base? Or will we be able to attract employers and employees—at a faster rate than in the 1990s—to keep our tax base broad enough to support greater state spending? We will reach a crisis point where deep spending cuts and steep tax increases are unavoidable? Or will we, in the next few years, find the courage to enact systemic reforms that will prepare Minnesota for these inevitable challenges? I'm betting on the latter, because I know you can't lead a cow down stairs. MJ

Duane Benson is the executive director of the Minnesota Business Partnership, a non-profit, nonpartisan public policy group comprised of 12 CEO's leading the state's largest employers.

Health continued from page 2

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State budget continued from page 5

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2002 Twin Cities tax base sharing by counties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Total net tax base before fiscal disparities</th>
<th>C/I tax base per capita before sharing</th>
<th>C/I tax base per capita after sharing</th>
<th>Net gain or loss of tax base due to sharing</th>
<th>% change in tax base per capita due to sharing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anoka</td>
<td>$185,413,619</td>
<td>$11,589,800</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
<td>$180</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carver</td>
<td>$512,433,600</td>
<td>$1,702,359</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
<td>$178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hennepin</td>
<td>$1,601,349,000</td>
<td>$6,041,207</td>
<td>-3.5%</td>
<td>-9%</td>
<td>$302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramsey</td>
<td>$714,273,600</td>
<td>$15,476,413</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>$122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott</td>
<td>$715,598,476</td>
<td>$1,389,730</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>$171</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2002 twin tax base sharing at a glance

- Top 5 net gainers, fastest year (St. Paul, $16,952,381 (1) MN)
  - Bloomington, $280,715,524 ($3,324,129 (1))
  - Eden Prairie, $77,045,700 ($14,712,706 (1))
  - Prior Lake, $65,000,500 (1)
  - Apple Valley, $32,750,500 (1)

- Sources: MINNESOTA HOUSE RESEARCH DEPARTMENT

- In actual dollar terms, the top five contributors to the tax base before sharing were Minneapolis ($3,324,129 (1)), Bloomington, $280,715,524 ($3,324,129 (1)), Eden Prairie, $77,045,700 ($14,712,706 (1)), Prior Lake, $65,000,500 (1), and Apple Valley, $32,750,500 (1).

- Before the fiscal disparities program, 12 cities saw an increase in their overall tax base due to tax base sharing. The result is that the disparities program has increased the tax base due to economic development and other factors.

- Value tax base, which comes to a city, in part, as the result of regional decisions about infrastructure, can lower the tax rate and still raise the amount needed to provide basic services. The result is that the communities with smaller tax bases and higher tax rates become less attractive to businesses looking to relocate or expand, making it difficult for these communities to attract the industrial property needed to grow their own tax base, and the cycle continues.

- The fiscal disparities program shares tax base, not revenue, because the disparities program was designed to help the communities that are suffering from disparities in their tax base due to economic development and other factors.

- The top five cities after sharing are Prior Lake, $112, Minnetonka, $75,760,000 ($110,514 (1)), Eden Prairie, $32,750,500 (1), Bloomington, $512,433,600 (1), and Hennepin, $280,715,524 ($3,324,129 (1)).

- In actual dollar terms, the top five contributors to the tax base after sharing were Minneapolis ($16,952,381 (1)), Bloomington, $280,715,524 ($3,324,129 (1)), Eden Prairie, $77,045,700 ($14,712,706 (1)), Prior Lake, $65,000,500 (1), and Apple Valley, $32,750,500 (1).
Yugo Lanes? Equity concerns about so-called "Lexus lanes" have slowed momentum in the Twin Cities for High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes, where solo drivers can pay an electronically collected toll to use underutilized HOV lanes. Ironically, a new study on a four-year-old project in San Diego shows that the highest level of support for the HOT concept comes from—you guessed it—the lowest income users (80% support).

And while some Minnesota politicians fret about consumer acceptance of HOTs, San Diego citizens support having a timesaving option on the freeway by an overwhelming 91 percent to 7 percent margin.

—Joe Loveland

A report by the Council on Graduate Medical Education in the 1990s forecast a surplus of physicians based on predicted demand for visits and procedures. A new analysis in the January/February 2002 issue of Health Affairs paints a very different picture. It found that demand for medical care has grown 50 percent faster than the gross domestic product over the past 70 years. Even given the substitution of nurse practitioners, physician assistants and other paraprofessionals, there will be an estimated shortage of 50,000 physicians by 2010. Given the long lead times in physician training, these new findings suggest further urgent attention to physician supply issues.

—Lyle Wray

New York cleans up buses. New York State will use $4.2 million in bond funds to purchase 35 hybrid-electric and 128 compressed natural gas (CNG) buses for use in three cities. This brings the state's total investment to $25 million for 538 clean fuel buses. By comparison, if Metro Transit in the Twin Cities metropolitan area had 538 clean fuel buses, that would be half of the entire fleet. For more information go to www.nyserda.org/pressother2001.html.—L.W.

Women deserve a fair hearing in the state's redistricting process. A friend-of-the-court brief filed in January by the Minnesota Women's Campaign Fund (MWPC) with the state's Special Redistricting Panel argues judges should consider gender discrimination and the impact redistricting will have on women incumbents when redrawing the state's legislative boundaries. All of the redistricting plans submitted to the panel disproportionately affect the ability of women legislators in both parties to run for re-election, MWPC charges. The plans impact more than a quarter of women lawmakers, by either pairing them against each other, or changing their district boundaries to include substantially new territory, or by placing them into "unsafe" districts where a majority of voters are registered to the opposition party. To read the brief go to www.mwcf.org—J. Trout Lowen

A battle royale between 45 suburban cities and a 100-member alliance of neighborhood activists, smart growth advocates and bigger cities is underway over a law that would share sales tax revenues in metropolitan Sacramento. The Bill is AB680 and may be found at www.assembly.ca.gov—L.W.

At the Minnesota Council on Foundations annual meeting, Bruce Flessner indicated that more than 150,000 grants totaling more than $10 million were distributed from Fidelity Gift Fund accounts to Minnesota nonprofit organizations. Now, if we could only find out who gave and which organizations were impacted, we might be able to discover more about the nature of these grants. Are they available to many organizations, as is more typical among foundations and public charities, or do these grants simply represent another donor checkbook?—Marina M. Lyon

 Builders in Portland, Oregon are taking the idea of making buildings "green" quite seriously. In an effort to promote building new infrastructure that has less of an impact on the environment, developers are implementing new technologies to save energy, recycling building materials, and even making the tops of buildings green—by planting vegetation on the roofs. The reason for the "forested" roofs is to help decrease the pollution associated with rainfall. As the plants absorb the water, they release it down the building at a slower rate, decreasing the amount of roof asphalt pollution contained in the runoff. Plants also help conserve energy by protecting the roof from extreme temperatures and ultraviolet rays—reducing energy costs. Are we likely to see trees on the roof of the IDS center? Probably not, but since the energy mantra around the Department of Commerce is conservation, maybe this carries potential for future buildings around the metro area.—Scott McMahon

Residential electric consumption rose from 924 billion kilowatt hours in 1989 to 1,231 in 2000, about a 33 percent increase in 11 years.—L.W.

High school enrollment in the United States is expected to peak in 2005. Secondary school enrollment rose from 15.6 million in 1991 and is expected to peak at 18.9 million in 2005. It will drop off to 18.2 million in 2011.—L.W.

Take note contributors include Journal and League staff members and former League staffers Joe Loveland, a communications consultant, and Marina Lyon, president of the Pohlad Family Charities.
Welcome

New and returning members

Jamie and Bridget Borell
Peter Grills
Mark Hinds
William Hoffman
Nancy Mate
Steve Schultz

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. Suggested dues are $50 for individuals and $75 for families. Please call 612-338-0791 for more information.

2002 Public Affairs Directory now available.

More on the fiscal disparities survey at www.citizensleague.net.

See details on both on the other side.

Phil Jenni leaves to take a walk on the wild side

He survived 16 years, two executive directors, 15 presidents, 16 research associates, 45 study reports, 17 fiscal disparities reviews, 16 property tax surveys, 260 Minnesota Journals, 388 payrolls, and hundreds of grant proposals and fundraising letters.

And now Citizens League finance director Phil Jenni is moving on to new challenges. Jenni will depart the League at the end of February to become executive director of the Wildlife Rehabilitation Center of Minnesota.

Jenni joined the League in December 1985 as finance director, but “Renaissance man” more aptly describes the many roles he has filled. As de facto chief operating officer, Jenni has managed the League’s day-to-day operations, finances, budgeting and personnel. But he also has helped create and plan some of the League’s most successful member programs, including the Mind-Opener policy forums, Speak Ups! and Legislative Networks, and has been known to staff study committees on occasion. He has written and edited the monthly Matters and is staff editor of the Minnesota Journal.

In his capacity as the most recent unofficial historian, he wrote a brief history of the League, and with Paul Gilje, produced a slide show on the League’s history for the annual meeting in 1992. And as the League’s unofficial carpenter he was spotted putting up walls and taping sheetrock when the League’s offices were remodeled in 1994.

Jenni brought a unique brand of “curmudgeonly optimism” to the Citizens League and has been indispensable, said executive director Lyle Wray. “For ten years, Phil has been my right arm. I am now an amputee.”

Jenni takes the reins of the non-profit Wildlife Rehabilitation Center on March 1. The center provides medical care, rehabilitation and release for injured and orphaned wildlife, as well as professional training and community education. Established in 1979 as a student organization, it now is an independent community partner of the University of Minnesota.

Farewell to Phil

Please join us for a reception in recognition of Phil Jenni’s 16 years at the Citizens League.

Thursday, March 7
5:30—7 p.m.

Hors d’oeuvres and a cash bar
Suggested donation: $10

University Club
420 Summit Avenue
St. Paul

To reserve please call 612-338-0791 or info@citizensleague.net

Special thanks to the University Club for their support.

Phil Jenni working on the 2001 tax increment financing report
The Citizens League at 50, creating good ideas, for a better Minnesota

The Citizens League is celebrating its 50th anniversary with a glimpse back at past achievements and by looking forward to coming challenges. Last month, we began this retrospective by tracing the beginnings of the League to the immediate post-war years in the late 1940s until its formal beginning on February 14, 1952.

On February 18, 1952 the Board held its first meeting and elected Stuart Leck as president. Today, five of the 31 original board members are still members of the League including vice-presidents Bruce Dayton and Maynard Hasselquist, and secretary Donald Fraser. The others are: Charles Howard and Ray Black (who later became the first executive director).

Financial support from Minneapolis' largest businesses and support and leadership from a broad cross section of people not previously members of the Good Government Group were critical to the launching of the reconstituted civic organization.

From the beginning the new Citizens League worked to make sure its board and membership represented Republicans, Democrats, labor, management and diverse racial and religious groups.

A very active group of volunteers took ownership of the new organization in its first few months. During the early months of 1952 "fireside meetings" were held in dozens of homes throughout the Minneapolis area. Members of the new Membership Committee recruited people to host meet-ings and then assigned others to phone neighbors of the host. A Speakers Committee furnished a speaker who was trained to explain the Citizens League, answer questions and sign up new members at the membership rate of $5.

The Membership and Speakers committees also arranged to have speakers at local service club meetings and at church groups. The Publicity Committee produced newspaper stories and guest editorials for the morning and the evening papers. But it was the fireside meetings, over 100 of which were held in the League's first 18 months, that proved to be the best means for recruiting new members and building a strong base of financial support.

The League hired its first professional staff in the spring of 1952, and on April 14, 1952, Ray Black was hired as the first executive director. Albert Richter was hired as research director a couple of months later.

By the end of May 1952 membership had grown to 900, study committees had been organized and the first issue of the News Bulletin circulated.

Approximately 150 people attended the first annual membership meeting, held on June 11, 1952, by which time membership had grown to 1,017. The meeting included a panel discussion of city and county problems and featured two aldermen and two members of the County Board.

It was apparent from the start that $5 memberships would not support a full program of research and action. Consequently, the League recruited 330 additional contributors, mostly businesses but also including labor unions, a church, foundations and individuals.

By the end of 1953 the League had nearly 2,200 members (about 25% of whom were from Hennepin County outside of Minneapolis, about the same percentage as the population at the time). It had held four general membership meetings, 107 fireside meetings, booked 211 speakers on the League, participated in 14 radio and nine television shows, and received over 1,000 inches of newspaper publicity, plus mention in 21 editorials.

Frank Lloyd Wright, who was born in the same Wisconsin town as director Ray Black, spoke to over 1,000 people at the League's annual meeting in 1957. That meeting is still the largest gathering in League history. By the mid-1950s the League was firmly established and ready to make an impact on public policy.

Next month: The new organization begins to make its mark on public policy.


The Citizens League Public Affairs Directory (PAD) is a must for anyone interested in the who and where of public policy in the metropolitan region.

The PAD contains the names, addresses, and contact numbers for public officials in government and education. There are also listings for communication and community organizations, many with website information. A handy reference book and easier to use than traditional phone book listings.

The PAD still sells for $15 for members ($20 for non-members), and our postage charge has held the line at $1.50. Order your copy today at www.citizensleague.net or call 612-338-0791.

This month's issue of the Minnesota Journal contains the League's annual survey of the metropolitan tax base sharing law known as fiscal disparities. For space reasons only about half of the article is printed in the Journal. For the full story please go to www.citizensleague.net. The League website also has a story about the history of fiscal disparities.