



JOURNAL

Expanding the Civic Imagination



CitiZing: Collaboration for the common good

The Citizens League's software platform, CitiZing, facilitates collaborative decision-making to solve public problems

By Erin Sapp

It would be an understatement to say (for the millionth time) that the Internet has revolutionized nearly every aspect of how we work, learn, consume, and play. As we click through government websites for information about yard waste pick-up and email reports from home to work, retweet friends' tips on restaurant discounts, and sift through match.com for the perfect mate, we rarely think about how much of our lives now takes place online. In this age of laptops, WiFi hotspots, iPhones and digital media, few aspects of daily life are untouched by technology.

By and large, this change has made our lives more efficient, more convenient, and more inter-connected. Who doesn't love picking their seat on an airplane, having their financial data delivered to one central place, or the instant gratification that comes with a flood of "likes" in response to a Facebook post? But while communications, consumption, and information sharing have boomed in the Internet age, one aspect of our lives—civic participation—seems stuck in the past.

Sure we can look up our government representatives online, sign a petition, and even send targeted emails to elected officials, but these methods of one-way communication only marginally impact policy and don't really offer citizens a meaningful voice.

At the Citizens League, our goal is to change the conversation on civic issues, both in form and scope. Toward that end, we've created the online space CitiZing, which combines social networking, Web 2.0 tools and the Citizens League citizen-driven solution-

building process into a single online platform designed to facilitate civic networking and collaboration on public problems.

THE NEED FOR NEW CIVIC PROCESSES

It was during the Citizens League's Minnesota Anniversary Project (MAP 150) that we began to see the need for a better policymaking process built on citizen participation and true collaboration at all levels. To improve policy outcomes in Minnesota, citizens need to have an appropriate, defined, and meaningful role in policymaking. This concept reinforces the Citizens League's operating principles, which state that people affected by a problem should help to define the problem and

help to design and implement solutions, and that governance should be transparent all along the way. Over the past three years, the Citizens League has put this idea to the test in several demonstration projects—Property Tax Facts, Students Speak Out, and others—and is now applying these principles to the organization's current policy work, using both new technologies and more conventional tools.

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INSIDE

As requested, we've added a new section called Engagement on page 3 to keep you informed about Citizens League policy and civic work and all the ways that you can get and stay involved.

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CONNECTIONS

Building a League of Citizens

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

NICK BANOVTZ

Senior account executive, Padilla Speer Beardsley.

A Citizens League member for nearly two years, Nick has been active with the Emerging Leaders Committee and the 2009 Nominations Committee and has participated in Quantum Civics.



Why he joined:

My boss introduced me to the Citizens League and encouraged me to join. I became involved once I heard Sean Kershaw speak at my office several months later. I was convinced he needed to run for governor or U.S. Senate. He touted an active, passionate Minnesota and I wanted to be part of that.

How he practices civic engagement:

It's so easy to make a difference. One project I've been working on for nearly a year is a new course for White Bear Lake High School on the food industry, "Food for Fodder." I'm not a teacher, nor am I being compensated for this work—it's simply a way to pay it forward to my old stomping grounds. "Food for Fodder" examines many aspects of the food industry—a timely and relevant topic—including history, politics, economics, trade, distribution and scarcity, and organic versus genetically modified. Even local farms and food businesses will be involved. The course is administration-approved, and once it gets the board's green light, it will commence in fall 2011.

Why he recommends membership in the Citizens League to others:

For three reasons: It's unique to Minnesota (part of our DNA), it's results-oriented, and the organization gets things done.



Help us reach our goal of 2,600 members by the end of 2010. Don't forget to renew your membership and invite friends, colleagues, and family members to join the Citizens League. Basic suggested membership is just \$25 a year.

New and rejoining members, contributing organizations, recruiters, and volunteers

Individual members

Ardell Brede
Kelly Chaffee
Daniel Johnson
Courtney Lawson
Ali Lozoff
Diane Lynch
Bonnie McDaniel
Mark Misukanis
Stephanie Podulke
Erica Ulstrom
Ted Wager

David Wheeler

Ron Lattin

Julie Hoff

Janis Clay

Elam Baer

Carol Bauer

Firms and organizations

Best Buy

Bituminous Roadways

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota

Care Providers of MN

City Academy Charter Schools

Civic Source

Comcast Foundation

Cretin-Derham Hall

Dakota County Communities

Eugene McCarthy Center for Public Policy and Civic Engagement

Fredrikson & Byron P.A.

Friends of the St. Paul Library

Login Inc

Metropolitan Area Agency on Aging

Minitex Library Information Network

Minneapolis Association of Realtors

Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce

Minnesota Chamber of Commerce

Minnesota Community Foundation

Minnesota Secretary of State

Minnesota YMCA

Youth in Government

North Central Mineral Ventures

Office of the Legislative Auditor

Otto Bremer Foundation

Park Nicollet Health Services

Pohlad Family Foundation

Standard Heating & Air Conditioning

Wells Fargo

The Minneapolis Foundation

Twin Cities Medical Society

University of Minnesota

Wells Fargo

Recruiters

Amy Filice

Volunteers

Sheila Graham

Hannah Fong

Brian Cihacek

Jelan Heidelberg

Become a sustaining member today. Sign up to have your membership contribution deducted automatically from your account each month (until you tell us to stop). Sustaining members help the Citizens League by ensuring a consistent cash flow and reducing postage costs and processing time so that more of your membership dollars go toward accomplishing our mission. It's also easier on your budget! Become a sustaining member at any level. Sign up at <http://givemn.razoo.com/story/Citizens-League> or call us at 651-293-0575.

The Comcast Foundation has provided a generous three-year grant to help increase the involvement of young adults in the Citizens League. Our new Action Groups, StudentsSpeakOut.org, and our civic leadership programs are made possible, in part, with Comcast's support since 2006.



ENGAGEMENT

What We're Doing and How You Can Get Involved

CURRENT WORK

The Pathways to Prosperity Project is seeking input on implementation of the following general recommendations. For more details, visit www.citizensleague.org/prosperity.

If you know of examples, have ideas, or want to help advance any of the recommendations below, contact us.

- **Recasting** the role of welfare practitioner from a service delivery agent or caseworker to one of asset investment advisor or broker.
- **Giving** incentives directly to families and holding them accountable for identified outcomes.
- **Creating** structures to provide a community network of supportive families.
- **Replacing** traditional case management practices with "comprehensive asset-building coaching."
- **Providing** cross-training of practitioners from multiple organizations combined with a team-oriented network structure.
- **Reallocating** resources toward policies and structures that support independence and away from the approach of "navigating the lines."
- **Adapting** an asset-building framework in all poverty reduction initiatives.

Staff and members have been discussing the conclusions and recommendations from the **water policy report**, *To the Source: Moving Minnesota's Water Governance Upstream*, with people and organizations across Minnesota.

Would your group be interested in talking with us? Let us know.

All issues of the Minnesota Journal since 2003 are now available in a searchable library on our website. We will continue to improve and expand the library.

Contact us to help format these files and create digital copies of older issues.



Members talk with Stacy Becker, long-term care project manager, at the Long-Term Care Mind Opener at Macalester College on April 21.

The Citizens League's **civic policy agenda** is a new model for policymaking based on the belief that everyone—all people and organizations—has essential roles in developing the ideas, skills, and resources to govern for the common good. Visit the [website](#) to find out more.



Current members are pairing with new members to help them navigate their first few months with the Citizens League. "Ambassadors" introduce themselves to new members and offer to attend an event with them, to help them find opportunities to get involved, or to help them find answers to their Citizens League questions.

Become an ambassador—contact us to volunteer.

To get involved or find out more about any of these projects, contact Catherine Beltmann at cbeltmann@citizensleague.org or 651-293-0575 ext. 10

Get more information about all of our work at www.citizensleague.org.

TAKE NOTE

Innovation Spotlight

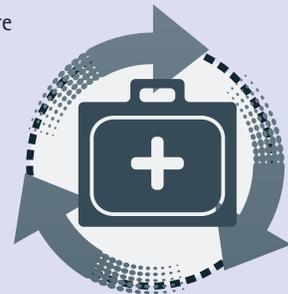
HARNESSING THE ENERGY OF PLAY

Can there be a better way to generate electricity than playing soccer? Four Harvard students have developed **sOcket**, a prototype soccer ball that uses inductive coil technology to generate electricity when rolled, kicked, or thrown. The technology is similar to that used in flashlights that power up when shaken. For each 15 minutes of playing time, the soccer ball generates enough power for three hours of LED light. In poor rural areas this may be enough to light a home or charge a cell phone. The students have been testing prototypes with kids in South Africa and Kenya.

www.socket.com



In some cases, unused surgical devices are thrown away just because they have been removed from the packaging. Instead of throwing these devices out, the researchers are urging hospitals to reprocess the equipment, either by recalibrating, cleaning, sterilizing, or even remanufacturing.



A WATCHDOG FOR THE MODERN AGE

Little Sis bills itself as the "involuntary Facebook of powerful Americans." The website was created by the Sunlight Foundation, a Washington DC think-and-do tank that focuses on corporate and government accountability. The site works like a combination of Facebook and Wikipedia; people and organizations are nodes connected by relationships based on family, schools, charitable giving, political donations, government contracts, and more. Data is imported from official sources and updated by citizen contributors using authoritative sources linked to each page.



WASHINGTON DC TAXES DISPOSABLE BAGS



Washington DC is leading the way among American cities in reducing the number of disposable plastic and paper bags in use. A nickel-per-bag tax went into effect at the end of 2009. The initial effect appears to be tremendous. The number of bags used in January dropped to 3.3 million per month, down from an estimated 22.5 million bags per month before the tax. Ireland has led the way in taxing the use of disposable plastic bags. A tax implemented there in 2002 reduced the use of disposable bags by 90 percent.

The Washington DC bag tax is intended to reduce pollution in Chesapeake Bay watershed. The tax applies to all business that sell food or liquor, including restaurants, grocery stores, and convenience stores. Revenue raised by the tax will go to the new Anacostia River Cleanup Fund.

A PHOTO ID FOR PATIENT RECORDS

Simple changes can often yield the best results. The Mayo Clinic is attaching photographs of patients to all medical records in an effort to reduce errors and save costs. Health care providers already repeatedly ask patients' birthdates and full names to prevent errors. Identifying photos will make eliminating errors even easier.



MEDICAL WASTE—NOT

Health care facilities in the United States dispose of more than 4 billion pounds of waste each year, which makes them the second largest waste producer in the nation behind the food industry. It turns out that as much as 40 percent of that waste can be reused or recycled. In an article in the journal *Academic Medicine*, a group of researchers at Johns Hopkins has called upon their fellow practitioners to find more ways to reuse.

EXTREME GREEN I

The Adam Joseph Lewis Center at Oberlin College is on the cutting edge of green building. The building tracks all energy use with a dashboard designed by Lucid Design Group, which allows occupants to see real-time and historic graphs of energy use, heating, air quality, landscape, water use, and weather conditions. Oberlin College plans to expand its energy-saving campaign to build a green redesign of the college and the surrounding neighborhoods over the next 10 years. The project will unite efforts in green development, urban revitalization, sustainable agriculture, green jobs, education, and advanced energy technology.



EXTREME GREEN II

The Environmental Protection Agency is seeking the "biggest loser" building. The agency is sponsoring a **contest**, modeled on the television show "The Biggest Loser," to find the building that can reduce its energy usage the most in a single year. Fourteen buildings across nation were chosen from a pool of 200. Those buildings will deploy EnergyStar technologies and products in an effort to reduce total energy use for one year. Learn more at www.energystar.gov/BuildingContest.



Take Note compiled by Todd Suomela.



Mission and membership

Your help recruiting new members increases our relevance and impact

by Sean Kershaw

People are often surprised to learn that I'm an introvert, but I am.

So it surprises even me how much I enjoy spending time with our members. They tend to be optimistic, realistic, solution-oriented, and as a group, they cover a wide range of interests and talents. They are fun to hang out with in a wonderful wonky way, and their love of Minnesota inspires and motivates me.

Thanks to their hard work, membership in the Citizens League has grown more than 70 percent in the past seven years. This year our goal is to increase membership from 2,200 to 2,600, and we hope to have 3,200 members by the end of 2012—our 60th anniversary.

Growing our membership is about more than numbers. It is a fundamental part of the Citizens League's mission of building civic imagination and capacity in Minnesota. Increasing membership increases our impact on public policy by developing a base of civic leaders in all types of institutions who can govern for the common good.

We need to build that base. Minnesota is stuck. Most of what passes for public policy "action" right now is merely protecting the status quo. This isn't progress; it doesn't address our very real challenges nor does it create the kind of legacy we can proudly pass on to the next generation.

From education to taxes to long-term care to pensions, we need to develop new and innovative policy strategies to deal with our state's urgent problems, and we need to build the political capacity to implement them. We have to create a constituency—a legion of citizens—to support the tough decisions that will get us unstuck.

To build that base, we need your help. Recruiting new members is an expression of your role as an active citizen, and one of the most important ways you can answer the question, "How can I help the Citizens League—and Minnesota?"

We hope to have
3,200 members by the
end of 2012—our
60th anniversary.

If you believe in the Citizens League's mission to develop civic imagination and civic capacity across the state, across generations, and across our political divisions, then I urge you to take the next step. Talk to others about the Citizens League and ask them to join. Tell them why our work is important to Minnesota, and to you, personally.

FROM STATS TO STORIES

Data and in-depth analysis remain a core part of the Citizens League's work. Within the last year, we've published reports and made recommendations on water policy, poverty, long-term care, and other issues.

But behind the facts and figures are the stories of the real Minnesotans impacted by our public policies: the now-impooverished widow forced to spend down all of her assets to care for a dying spouse; the single parent forced to choose between a better paying job and the childcare subsidy that allows her to work; the farmer working to develop new practices to protect our lakes and streams from run-off pollution.

It's the *story* behind the facts that make our policy research meaningful and compelling. And it's these stories, and your story, the story of why you choose to be involved in the Citizens League, that will be meaningful and compelling to others. These stories create the civic imagination in our mission.

IMPACTING AND ORGANIZING

It's also stories like these, the life experiences of Minnesotans like you, which will help us to build better policy solutions. As an organization, we firmly believe that

people impacted by a problem should help to define the problem and develop the solutions. We can't do that well if we don't bring more people to the table, if we don't look for expertise outside of the usual circles of influence.

That's why we need to guard against becoming a club of like-minded members. We need to overcome the partisan pitfalls that have created our current policy stalemate. We need to organize our friends, our neighbors, our coworkers, and those we worship with around a common goal: our shared civic values.

Our membership goal this year is 2,600, but there's no reason it couldn't be 26,000 someday. As Minnesotans, we all have a role in creating the common good and in developing the public policies that reflect our collective values.

Identify as a liberal? Recruit a conservative. Work for a nonprofit? Invite someone from the private sector to Policy and a Pint®. An emerging leader? Encourage a "seasoned citizen" to join a policy study committee. Fourth-generation Minnesotan? Bring a new Minnesotan to a Mind Opener.

By organizing our diverse interests around our common hopes for Minnesota's future we become more powerful than the sum of our parts.

FROM STORIES TO MEMBERS

Joining is easy. Call 651-293-0575 or click <http://bit.ly/cTquBR>. A basic membership costs just \$25 a year. Or, give someone a gift membership or simply invite them to an event. Talk about the Citizens League and what it means to you and to Minnesota.

Together our stories can begin to write a new chapter in the great civic narrative that is Minnesota. ●

Sean Kershaw is the Citizens League's Executive Director. He can be reached at skershaw@citizensleague.org, [@seankershaw](https://twitter.com/seankershaw) (Twitter), Facebook, or his blog at citizensleague.org/blogs/sean/.



What does it mean to be accountable?

When it comes to K-12 education, it depends on who you ask

By Stacy Becker

Accountability is quite the buzzword these days. But just what does it mean to be “accountable?” Specifically, how do we hold individuals or institutions accountable for outcomes that are inherently the product of collective efforts? Nowhere does this get more absurd than in K-12 education.

On behalf of the Citizens League, a colleague, Kim Farris-Berg, and I had the opportunity to interview a number of students and educators about a proposed system of accountability and standardized testing for Minnesota. Their comments illustrate an important and often overlooked point, that true accountability only exists if it works in practice, that is, only if it produces the intended results.

WHAT ISN'T WORKING

American students took an estimated 45 million tests in 2006, a number that certainly has risen as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirements kicked in. The federal government has provided states with about \$400 million a year for NCLB assessments, yet 26 of 44 states report that the majority of their state’s total funding for assessments came from state government funds for 2007-08, according to the General Accounting Office.

While it is arguable that all of this testing is improving student performance, we know it is producing some shameful behavior by adults. Numerous states are softening standards or delaying requirements to avoid showing high levels of failure. In 2009, 43 percent of Minnesota’s 11th graders failed to pass the state math text, which requires students master Algebra II skills, quadratic equations and trigonometry to graduate. The Legislature, horrified at denying diplomas to so many children, revised the requirement, creating a new version of three strikes and you’re out: Take the test three times and if you still don’t pass, we’ll give you a diploma anyway.

It gets worse. Educators in some states are cheating on students’ exams! The schools are changing the students’ test scores so the schools look better. Schools that fail to show adequate yearly progress (another odd measure) are faced with a number of remedial actions, one of which is “turnaround.” Here in Minnesota, where we’re “nice,” turnaround can be a fancy word for reshuffling the deck chairs. As one teacher described it to me, when a school is reconstituted, the poor performing teachers are let go—to another school.

Is it possible to be “accountable” for achieving the intended outcomes? Interestingly, at one meeting an adult said precisely this, in different words. “Let’s face it. We don’t do this for the

kids. It’s all for the adults—so we can tell ourselves we’re doing the right things.”

ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE EYES OF THOSE ACCOUNTABLE

After interviewing 59 high school students and 20 educators from six schools about Minnesota’s proposed accountability system, we found insights that suggest what the ingredients for an effective accountability system should be:

- crystal-clear standards
- fair and realistic expectations
- mechanisms for achieving those expectations
- incentives aligned across all of the players in the system
- an understanding and deliberate weighing of the opportunity costs

It is important to state that no educator nor student in these discussions questioned the state’s right to hold schools, educators, or students accountable for their work. Their concerns centered instead on how accountability is practiced.

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Clear standards. Throughout our discussions, it became clear that Minnesota has not agreed upon what a high school diploma should mean, that is, the skill set that students acquire by graduation. Not surprisingly then, one teacher after another expressed frustration about the need to interpret state standards because they lack clarity. The standards are so lengthy that one teacher described the current system as “without focus” and others felt that the standards encourage shallow coverage of many topics rather than a deeper understanding of critical topics. There was one teacher, however, who said he understood the state standards perfectly well. When asked to elaborate, he stated, “Well, it took me a couple of years of research to do it.”

The upshot is that teachers don’t know what they or students are being held accountable for. As one educator said, “There should be no secret about what you’re expected to learn.”

Fair and realistic expectations. The only way that expectations can be fair and realistic is if the person being held accountable can control the outcomes. And the only outcome one can control is one’s own behavior. Students and educators understand this viscerally.

Some students took issue with the idea of being held accountable for learning under a system in which they have little control. In particular, several mentioned that while they don’t really have the power to select their teachers, teachers’ abilities and chosen methods can have a big influence on their learning and

performance against standards. Students at one school sensed themselves regressing in 10th grade, and they all respectfully said it was due to the teacher.

Some teachers face gargantuan tasks, and their successes, along with those of the students, are not recognized by our current accountability system. Educators in one school described an entering class of 15 students, none of whom were on track to pass the Algebra II exam in 11th grade. Among these students, average math proficiency was at a fifth grade level; the top student was at grade level 8.5. For these students and their teachers, the Algebra II standard only made them feel defeated about math, though they may have made admirable progress. Here's how one teacher described her despair at trying to bring students up multiple grade levels in a matter of months:

Educators strongly emphasized that tests should be developmental in nature, helping educators and students track a student's progress, build confidence from achievements, and diagnose weaknesses. They feel the current system is grossly deficient in this regard..."

"How do I help? I've hit every tool in the toolbox. I don't know what to do. They [the students] don't know what to do. It's very sad. They work so hard."

Mechanisms to achieve. School is as much a process as an outcome—how do students learn to learn? How do they learn to deal with challenges and learn the discipline to tackle material or situations that might intimidate or bore them?

Educators strongly emphasized that tests should be developmental in nature, helping educators and students track a student's progress, build confidence from achievements, and diagnose weaknesses. They feel the current system is grossly deficient in this regard and that they do not receive the feedback they need from the test results to help them evaluate the effectiveness of their own teaching practices. A few teachers commented that simply passing a test (especially one given as early as 9th or 10th grade) doesn't help. Students need feedback so they can continually progress. Students, too, want schools to be able to assess their progress (preferably as individuals in addition to on average), and to use the findings to improve teaching and learning methods for students attending their particular school.

Aligned incentives. The current accountability system makes the assumptions that tests, when tied to graduation, are a power-



ful motivator for students. Many of the students in this discussion disagreed.

"The test is actually doing the opposite of motivating me. It's discouraging me. It's blocking me, despite all my hard work."

"No, the tests aren't pushing us. They're laying on top of us!"

"I'm never afraid of failing. I know I'm taking the test on test day and that I'll pass. I don't care how I did."

Students don't see themselves as accountable to standardized tests. They achieve for themselves. Many view Minnesota's current system as failing to recognize their daily accountability, which they demonstrate by attendance, completing course assignments and tests, and even through their achievements outside of school at internships, jobs, and other activities.

The legislative reprieve on the Algebra II exam was the hot button issue for many educators in this discussion. Some felt they had been personally discredited in the eyes of their students, as they had repeatedly warned and encouraged students about the importance of doing well on the exam. But educators also expressed concern that they have been set up to fail. The school will be held accountable if students don't score well, but what motivation is there for students to do well? They know the test does not matter. Some educators described the students as pawns in a testing system designed to meet the schools' needs, not the students' needs.

Misalignment of interests was expressed in other ways as well. Students who really cared about their schools claimed that they were motivated to do well so that the school would perform well, while students who did not like their schools admitted to purposely sabotaging tests in which they had no personal stake.

Opportunity costs. The adage, “What you measure is what you do,” is wise to keep in mind. Educators and students agreed that what can be measured on a standardized test (even a good test, and many were not willing to concede that the current tests are good) is but a small portion of the knowledge and skills learned in high school.

“[Tests include] no problem-solving skills, no [measures for] diplomacy and tact. They test two of the eight intelligences. Where are the other six?”

“The tests are irrelevant to what so many students are trying to do. Like my friends who are really talented in fine arts and are wasting their time trying to pass the math test. We should be valuing these talents. Instead we’re making it impossible for them to get a job.”

“[Tests] are based on 20th century educational practices... teaching to the test is detrimental to 21st century skills.”

“If a student struggles to pass a test, [the test] more and more prescribes their day.”

The legislative reprieve on the Algebra II exam was the hot button issue for many educators in this discussion. Some felt they had been personally discredited in the eyes of their students.

WHO IS ULTIMATELY ACCOUNTABLE?

The *Star Tribune* recently ran an editorial that read in part, “The point of putting the GRAD (Minnesota high school testing) system in place was to make students individually accountable for their learning, unlike other programs that hold only teachers and schools accountable.” But students already face the ultimate accountability—how they fare with the rest of their lives.

Students who are determined to succeed will succeed regardless of standardized testing. For example, look at the success of these high school dropouts: Wolfgang Puck, Cher, Benny Goodman, George Bernard Shaw, billionaire Richard Branson, and Bank of America founder Amadeo Peter Giannini. Of course,

“How do I help? I’ve hit every tool in the toolbox. I don’t know what to do. They [the students] don’t know what to do. It’s very sad. They work so hard.”

these are extreme happy endings. The more common scenario for those who do not achieve in high school is a life spent struggling to make ends meet. For students who do not see the connection between education and their lifelong prospects, however, it is unclear that a standardized test will do the trick. First and foremost, students learn for themselves.

“We’re accountable for ourselves like we will be in the real world. We learn from projects. We teach ourselves. We’re responsible for our learning. That’s why I am here every day.”

“I am so sick of ‘We need girls to learn math and science because we need to beat the Chinese and because we are America!’ Not everyone is a mathematician. I understand encouraging it, and technology is awesome. I have a job in environmental interpretation, so I’m contributing.”

“I don’t want to end up like my uncles and aunts. I want to be the first in my family to graduate.”

Citizens League operating principles state that people who are impacted by a problem should help define and solve that problem. Based on our discussions with students and educators, it seems they might frame an approach to the accountability question like this: Students pay the ultimate price for what happens in school. Graduation marks the culmination of 12-plus years spent in formal education, years that shape a young adult’s attitudes, values, skills, and knowledge. Accountability should be about the progress our students make each and every year in identifying and then reaching their dreams. Standardized testing, in this framework, may play a role, but not the starring role.

The Citizens League would like to thank the participating schools, educators, and students for contributing their time and insights to this important subject matter: Avalon School, Edina Senior High, Harding Senior High, High School for Recording Arts, Plymouth Youth Center, and Stewartville Senior High. ●

Stacy Becker is a consultant on the Assessment and Accountability project

**community connections
calendar** • point • click • engage

www.citizing.org/calendar

Looking for public affairs events from the Citizens League and other local organizations? The Community Connections Calendar is your one-stop shop for public affairs events in the Twin Cities.

The United Regions of America

by Stephen C. Fehr
Stateline.org

The Obama administration wants to change the way politicians fight for jobs by encouraging regions—instead of individual states and cities—to compete for economic development projects.

Accomplishing this sea change in economic thinking will be difficult. The current system of states and cities battling for companies, often outbidding each other with ever-higher tax breaks, is pretty ingrained. President Obama's hand-picked chairman of the Democratic National Committee, former Virginia Governor Tim Kaine, was one of the best practitioners; Virginia topped Forbes magazine's "best states for business" every year of his term.

But the administration believes that economic recovery will be led by a collection of regions around the U.S., not necessarily individual states. America's regions will battle those in other countries for supremacy in the global economy.

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To use one example, northern Ohio and southern Michigan have been walloped by the decline in the U.S. auto industry. So Obama wants the governors of those states and local officials in those regions to forget they are Buckeyes and Wolverines and work together to reinvent a common regional economy straddling state lines. The federal government will reward regions with financial incentives if they team up; the president recently gave \$25 million to a plant in Elyria, Ohio, west of Cleveland, that is producing batteries for electric vehicles built in Michigan. Federal officials say that the northern Ohio-southern Michigan region is poised to repackage itself as a clean-energy center.

Heading the administration's regional economic development strategy is John Fernandez, assistant secretary of commerce and the former mayor of Bloomington, Indiana. At a recent talk with a group of state legislators in Washington, Fernandez argued that the old ways of state and local governments chasing traditional smokestack industries is obsolete. "We need a different framework that is more sustainable," he says. "At the core of this framework is innovation."

The catch-phrase circulating around the development community is "regional innovation clusters." The term was thought up by Michael Porter of the Harvard Business School, an expert on competitive strategy, and refers to groups of businesses, universities, cities, counties and states joining to create a single job-generating unit. The Raleigh-Durham area of North Carolina knots together communications equipment, information technology, and education. Metropolitan Wichita, Kansas, clusters avia-

Minnesota's regions

The Citizens League has long been interested in policies that limit competition within regions for development that often leads to no net gain (and perhaps a net loss) for the region.

Economists such as Arthur Rolnick, senior vice president and director of research at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, have generally decried the use of public funds to attract development (see Rolnick's congressional [testimony](#) from 2007, "Congress Should End the Economic War Among the States").

One of the [original purposes](#) of fiscal disparities, the regional tax base sharing designed by the Citizens League in 1969, was to reduce the incentives for Twin Cities' communities to compete with each other for economic development. In the years since, in the [Minnesota Journal](#) and in our policy work, we have questioned the ability of Minnesota's local and state lawmakers to stringently apply the "but for" test when it comes to use of tax increment financing (TIF). How can a community tell when a subsidy is necessary to spur development or when a developer is simply pitting communities in the same region against each other to see which will offer the better deal? This piece on outlining new federal support for regional cooperation adds greater context to this debate.

—Bob DeBoer, director of policy development

tion, heavy machinery and oil and gas. The Seattle-Bellevue-Everett area in Washington State unites aviation, defense, fishing products, and analytical instruments. "They aren't towns or cities," says Fernandez. "They're regions. They work together because they are stronger that way."

Obama did not invent regionalism, but he is trying to revive it. Bruce Katz of the Brookings Institution, among others, has been preaching for more than 15 years about the need for robust "metropolitan economies" characterized by collaboration instead of competition. The president launched an Office of Urban Affairs which is working with Fernandez's agency to develop a national policy to strengthen cities. "Strong cities are the building blocks of strong regions and strong regions are essential for a strong America," Obama told the nation's mayors last year.

Stateline asked Fernandez how hard it will be to persuade states, which are used to competing against each other, to think in terms of collaborating regions even when those regions cross state lines. He was realistic about the difficulty of changing the culture, both at his appearance before the group of legislators April 9 in Washington and in a speech in Chicago in January.

"It's a new way to keep score," he says. "In the past, there was only one metric that mattered: the number of jobs created in my town [or state]. If you created a job, it had to be in your backyard to score points."

“We need a new way to measure success,” he says. “If the city next door creates 1,000 jobs, it doesn’t mean you lost—it means the region won. Jobs are not the only number. We need to rate our elected officials not just by the jobs they bring in today but by the jobs they make possible tomorrow.”

Maryland Governor Martin O’Malley, Virginia Governor Robert McDonnell, and Washington, DC Mayor Adrian Fenty are keeping score the old way. The leaders of a region that overlaps three jurisdictions are demonstrating right in Obama’s backyard the difficulty of changing the one metric that matters, especially in an election year: job creation.

Northrop Grumman, the giant defense contractor, is planning to move its corporate headquarters from Los Angeles to the Washington area, and that has touched off a brawl among O’Malley and Fenty, both Democrats, and McDonnell, a Republican. Each jurisdiction wants Northrop Grumman’s high-paying jobs and has offered the company millions of dollars in tax breaks so executives will choose them. O’Malley and Fenty are seeking reelection later this year; McDonnell was elected in November on a

job-creation platform. (According to the Washington Post, Northrop Grumman has eliminated DC from contention.)

If the elected officials were truly thinking regionally, they would declare the Washington DC area the winner of the defense derby and split the costs of incentives. They would offer a site for Northrop Grumman’s 150 employees in a part of the region near public transportation and in a place targeted for redevelopment. Local planners worry that picking a location in the congested Virginia or Maryland suburbs would exacerbate sprawl, the very thing that Obama’s urban affairs office is working against. But old habits die hard.

“We can’t make people collaborate,” Fernandez says. “We can shine a light on it as a framework that works. We can provide incentives. It’s going to be up to the civic leadership at the state and local level. We need help from states to support the idea of regionalism because not everyone does.” ●

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Kids Lead the Way—a winning idea

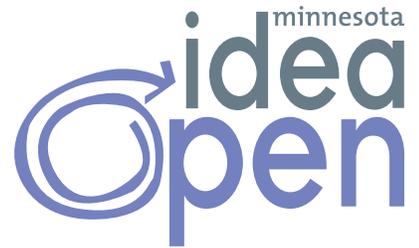
Kids Lead the Way, proposed by Christine Tubbs of Stillwater, won the first Minnesota Idea Open challenge on May 15. Tubbs’ idea was selected as one of three finalists from a pool of 414 submitted ideas for the challenge: addressing obesity in Minnesota. More than 4,000 people went online to vote for their favorite idea.

Tubbs proposes a youth-led program in which students create weekly field days and activities for classmates with the help of community partners, nutritionists, and local personal trainers. Participants bring ideas for “active” games, like Kick-the-Can, that can be played during the field day and with family and friends later.



Kids Lead the Way plans to create weekly field days activities to encourage students to be more active.

A project of the Minneapolis Community Foundation, Minnesota Idea Open seeks to harness the wisdom and ideas of Minnesota’s citizens to address some of the challenges facing the state. As the winner, Kids Lead the Way will receive \$15,000 in funding from the Community Foundation.



THE OTHER FINALISTS WERE:

Take the Soul Patch Statewide by Eric Warner. Create community gardens across Minnesota to benefit low-income communities and local food shelves. Last year, his prototype garden, the Soul Patch, donated more than 2,000 pounds of fresh produce to the Morrison County Food Shelf with an investment of just \$200.

Library Wellness Challenge by Amy Schroeder Ireland. Establish libraries in the Hamline-Midway neighborhood and beyond as community gathering spots to host health- and wellness-related challenges and events while bolstering related materials available for check-out.

Minnesota Idea Open plans to sponsor at least one major statewide idea challenge each year. This challenge was made possible with support from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and the Minnesota Community Foundation and with the support of local partners including the Citizens League, Grassroots Solutions, Padilla Speer Beardsley, and Minnesota Public Radio. ●

Impressed by the Citizens League's use of technology to gather citizen input during the MAP 150 project, many organizations asked if we could "do the citizen outreach" for their policy projects, too. They wanted to draw upon our expertise with social networking and Web 2.0 tools (tools that foster two-way communications, like surveys and discussion forums) to catch the wave of the online trend. While that wasn't the work of the Citizens League, we happily pointed them toward the existing and affordable online tools they could use: Survey Monkey, Wikispaces, Ning, and others. In nearly every case, however, these organizations lacked both the technical ability to use the tools and (perhaps more importantly) clarity about what they wanted to achieve by using the tools. It became evident that there was a distinct need, particularly among nonprofits and governments, for an easy-to-use online platform that could facilitate meaningful interaction with the public to improve outcomes.

Over the past three years, we've researched and tested what seems like dozens of existing tools: Ning, Drupal, Wikispaces, Basecamp, Survey Monkey, Survey Gizmo, PBWiki, E-Democracy, Facebook, MySpace, Gather, and WordPress, to name just a few. We hoped to be able to use or even customize one of them to facilitate our new civic engagement process online. Much to our chagrin, however, none of these tools cut the mustard. So, we forged ahead and built our own platform, *CitiZing*.

A GROUNDBREAKING CIVIC NETWORK

CitiZing is a software platform designed to broker interactions between citizen policymakers and formal policymakers to facilitate a collaborative decision-making process to solve public problems. The CitiZing platform combines social networking with easy-to-use Web tools. It provides space for project management, resources, and a calendar while offering a customizable interface and facilitating the Citizens League's unique solution-building process. Drawing on one of the findings from The Minnesota Anniversary Project (MAP 150)—the number one barrier to civic involvement is that current processes are "all talk and no action"—we built the CitiZing process to drive toward actionable outcomes. It's a place for getting work done, not just for talk, research, and analysis. CitiZing is designed for individuals who want to contribute to solving public problems, formal policymakers who need to harness the vision and unique expertise of their constituents, organizations that seek to develop innovation solutions and build broad support, and everyone in between. CitiZing aims to be the common ground where *everyone* can come together to work towards the common good.

PARKS & TRAILS LEGACY PROJECT

In its inaugural project, the Citizens League is partnering with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) on its Parks and Trails Legacy Project to facilitate public participation in decision-making about how money from the state's 2008 Legacy Amendment and other traditional funding should be spent over the next 10-25 years. The vision and priorities of Minnesotans will inform and guide the recommendations. This citizen-centered approach is a first for the DNR, and a significant departure from traditional government processes that have often viewed public "participation" more in terms of marketing and communications than authentic input.

CitiZing is designed for individuals who want to contribute to solving public problems, decision makers who need to harness the vision and unique expertise of their constituents, organizations that seek to develop innovation solutions and build broad support, and everyone in between.

The CitiZing toolkit

- **Surveys.** We're using interactive clickers to pose questions in live formats and we're translating this activity online
- **Forums,** commonly known as message boards or discussion threads, allow participants to hold open discussions, to drill down deeper than surveys or other similar tools, and to offer a free flow of information and perspectives.
- **Ratings** allow participants to show how much they like an idea using a 1-5 star rating system.
- **Wikis** provide a streamlined way to work collaboratively on documents, eliminating the need for emailing different versions back and forth. Participants can write, make changes, provide comments, and develop a document that reflects the diversity of contributors' perspectives and ideas, rather than a single point of view.
- **Blogs,** online personal journals, have been revolutionary in publicizing individual perspectives. On CitiZing, blogs can be used to provide frequent project updates and to showcase various perspectives. Blogs foster greater project transparency.
- **Timelines** show when activities are happening and how they fit into the broader project.

But as important as having all of these tools in one location is the way the tools are connected to create a collaborative, cohesive, and transparent project.

You can participate in the Parks and Trails Project right now, online or offline. The online process is easy; just go online to www.citizing.org and complete a short sign-in form. Introduce yourself to other participants and tell them something about your experience with the state's parks and trails. There, you can also participate in our qualitative survey, share your vision for Minnesota's parks and trails, and view the project calendar that lists dates and locations for the in-person regional workshops to

be held throughout the state. In the coming months, participants will be invited to discuss the survey results, rate ideas that emerge from the online and offline processes, and track and comment on the project's progress through its completion at the end of this year.

By harnessing the power of the Internet and utilizing social networking tools, CitiZing will enable the DNR to reach a much broader and more diverse selection of Minnesotans that more traditional processes for public input (public hearings and comment submissions for example) have in the past. CitiZing works as a complement to in-person processes, providing an avenue to reach more Minnesotans and sustain participation over time. Input from these processes, we believe, will help to lead to better outcomes for Minnesota's parks and trails.

HOW IT WORKS

The CitiZing platform designed to host "projects," either projects sponsored by the Citizens League or other organizations, or projects initiated by users. Each project page serves as a mini-website with activities, a calendar showing the project timeline and next steps, links to background information and research, a list of participants, and a blog to keep participants updated on progress

Building blocks of a civic network

CIVIC NETWORKING

Drawing on the principles of social networking, CitiZing creates a civic network. It provides a space for users to discover and make connections they may not have made elsewhere. CitiZing creates opportunities for both individuals and organizations to find each other based on name, location, topics of interest, or self-identified skill sets. This allows individuals to find projects to participate in related to their areas of interest, and project hosts to find and recruit participants based upon interest areas, geographic location, or needed skills.

SOLUTION-BUILDING PROCESS

CitiZing provides the option of utilizing the Citizens League unique and effective solution-building process. This civic collaboration process establishes common ground, provides meaningful and clearly defined participant roles, and, ultimately, elicits better outcomes. It helps decision makers create meaningful and transparent public processes with clearly defined and influential citizen roles. It also provides a space for citizens to collaborate and bring forth their concerns and ideas in productive and effective ways. The CitiZing solution-building process has three phases: problem diagnosis, analysis and conclusion, and implementation.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

CitiZing provides unique project management functionality focused on collaboration. Activities are task-based according to the project's unique timeline and needs. Gone are the days of all surveys, wikis, and

discussions lumped together, regardless of their relevance to the timeline. CitiZing project management functionality allows project managers to group activities—surveys, wikis, ratings, and others—under any task or to-do list.

RESOURCE CENTER

The CitiZing resource center offers a repository for all types of information related to a topic, including traditional sources—reports, news articles, and studies—and nontraditional sources, such as links to blogs, videos, pictures, other CitiZing project summaries, and activities happening elsewhere online.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS CALENDAR

A one-stop calendar for all civic events in Minnesota, the [Community Connections Calendar](#) has recently migrated to CitiZing. While still under development, it will soon include user-friendly features like email digests, event downloads into personal calendars, RSS feeds, and seamless integration with CitiZing projects. Organizations will also be able to fully integrate it with their own websites by utilizing the calendar's iframe widget tools and automatic feeds to push and pull event data.

CUSTOMIZATION

CitiZing offers a flexible, customizable space. Tools and activities, timelines, tabs, privacy levels, administrative functions, and much more are all determined by project hosts. Future customization options will include custom URLs, colors, themes, and more.

and developments. Users can search projects by host, topic, or geography, a unique feature that will help citizens and organizations connect on relevant issues. CitiZing provides an all-in-one, easy-to-use toolbox for both organizations and individuals.

But just as important as having all of these tools in one location is the way that the tools are connected to create a collaborative, cohesive, and transparent project. Tools and features interact with each other and connect together to create

a holistic process for collaboration rather than a hodgepodge of random tools. This helps to facilitate

our innovative solution-building process focused on finding common ground among all parties and collectively working towards the common good while ensuring transparency.

To promote civility and honest dialogue, CitiZing will soon institute a signature rating system: the transparency rating. Too often when online, individuals can hide behind the anonymity of their computer screens and, consequently, behave in unbecoming ways they would never consider face-to-face. At the Citizens League, we believe that people should own up to their beliefs and work productively and collaboratively to solve our common problems, even when they disagree. Participants on CitiZing will be able to earn “transparency points” for providing verifiable information, such as an email address and a phone number. The information won’t be part of participants’ public profiles but will be available to Citizens League staff who can verify the information. Eventually, those who provide accurate information will become “verified” members of the site; anyone submitting false information will have points stripped away and be flagged as an “unverified” member. Providing this information lifts the veil of anonymity to reveal who users really are, thereby fostering a civil environment for debate similar to in-person activities. Eventually, project hosts will be able to limit participation to those who have a minimum transparency rating as a way to encourage honest and open interaction among project participants.

VALUE-ADDED

The intent of CitiZing is to build the civic capacity of individuals and organizations. As the CitiZing network of users grows, organizations will be able tap into an expanding database of active, engaged citizens. Project organizers will be able to search for individuals by topics of interest (transportation or classroom size, for example) or by a particular skill set (public speaking or research) and solicit their participation. CitiZing’s all-in-one toolbox makes it simpler and more efficient for organizations and government agencies to connect with the public online, and the Citizens League’s solution-building process will help foster stronger relationships with citizens and, ultimately, better outcomes.

CitiZing offers benefits for individuals as well. Participants can search for opportunities to engage by topic, geographic location, or project host (like a trusted organization). For example, someone



Help shape the future of Minnesota’s parks and trails by participating in CitiZing’s inaugural project at www.citizing.org.

living in St. Cloud can search for local projects related to redistricting or search for all of the projects hosted by the Citizens League within their area. In the future, users will be able to connect with other participants who share their interests, to create their own project, and to collaborate with other citizens, organizations, and formal policymakers.

GET INVOLVED

There are several ways to get involved with CitiZing now.

- Go to www.citizing.org, create a profile, and participate in the Parks and Trails Legacy Project.
- Follow us on Twitter (@citizing) and join our Facebook group (CitiZing).
- Give us feedback on your CitiZing experience. We’ll continue to develop and evolve the platform based upon use and feedback.
- Host your project on CitiZing. We are actively seeking project partners interested in working with the Citizens League on demonstration projects to show how policy work can be done differently to achieve better outcomes. Organizations and individuals can’t yet initiate their own projects. We want to ensure that the initial CitiZing projects are executed well, use citizens’ input to impact policy, and are well-managed by hosts. To learn more, click on the “about” tab at www.citizing.org and let us know if you have a potential project for CitiZing. ●

Erin Sapp is the Project Manager for CitiZing, an independent consultant in public policy, and a Citizens League member. She can be reached at erin@citizing.org and on Twitter (@erinsapp).

PERSPECTIVES

Expanding Minnesota's Conversation



Smart Grid offers the promise of 21st century energy utility

But security, privacy, and intellectual property concerns still need to be resolved

by Bill Glahn

To hear some in government and industry talk, the so-called Smart Grid—the envisioned replacement for our century-old, over-burdened, and sometimes unreliable electric grid—is the definitive answer to all our current and future electric power problems.

Consumption of electricity is on the rise? Smart Grid is the answer! Reliability of the existing system is a problem? Smart Grid can fix it!

Despite the hype, Smart Grid is not a panacea, but a necessary upgrade to the electric grid that threatens to collapse under the weight of its own promise. A backlash has already begun over the cost of some early pilot projects, as well as Smart Grid's potential vulnerability to hackers and cyber-terrorists.

Given the limitations of our existing electric grid, and the threats to our national security and economy, we should pay serious attention to upgrading it.

MAKING THE GRID "SMARTER"

Creating the Smart Grid does not entail building a new grid from the ground up. It's about grafting technologies onto the existing system to make the whole system more dependable and efficient. What makes it "smart" is the promise that it will harness the power of information technology to monitor things like energy usage and cost, and adjust usage where necessary. No one company or governmental entity will hold sole responsibility for creating the Smart Grid. Everyone will build it: consumers who buy smarter appliances and the utilities that install monitoring devices in homes and businesses. It's a movement that has already started and will take several more years to complete.

21st CENTURY DEMAND

The National Academy of Engineering has hailed our current electrical transmission network as the greatest engineering

achievement of the 20th century. The industry has provided reliable, relatively inexpensive service that underpins much of the economic success we've enjoyed over the past century. But the existing system is struggling to keep up with today's demand. Population growth, bigger houses, and a growing list of must-have technologies are taxing the grid. In the past 40 years, there have been five large blackouts in the United States—three occurred within in the past nine years. According to the Department of Energy, the grid's centralized structure leaves us open to attack. The interdependencies of various grid components can bring about a domino effect that could bring our nation's banking, communications, traffic, and security systems to a standstill.

Smart Grid seeks to solve some of these problems by arming consumers and utilities with information that will enable them to reduce their usage and thus relieve some of the pressure on the system.

HOW SMART IS IT?

The conventional view of Smart Grid calls for utilities to install "smart meters" in homes and workplaces that are equipped with two-way communication so consumers and businesses can get real-time information to manage their energy usage according to personal preferences: when the cost of energy is expensive or cheap, or when the grid is full of electricity generated by the wind or by coal. Consumers might choose to save money, save the planet, or a little of both.

Of course, not everyone will be happy to put in the effort and change their behavior. The rest of us will be relieved to discover a third party can change our behavior for us. Companies like Google and Microsoft see profit opportunities in managing energy usage for homes and businesses. Smart appliances will be run remotely via the Internet as these data-management vendors optimize your energy consumption, reduc-

ing overall usage and taking advantage of the new information coming from smart meters more quickly and effectively than we mere humans can. Just plug in your preferences (convenience, cost, or the environment) and let Google's algorithms do the rest. Google has already developed their PowerMeter service and other similar technologies are close to becoming reality.

So where do I sign up, you ask? Not so fast.

PROTECTING PRIVACY AND SECURITY

While the federal stimulus package includes \$12 billion in grants for smart technology, the Waxman-Markey cap and trade bill includes 18 pages of mandates and restrictions on Smart Grid. Regulators can best help by first ensuring security and privacy on the grid. Because the Smart Grid will rely heavily on the Internet, which is vulnerable to privacy and security breaches, it's important to explore additional protections before we move much further. Sorting out who owns what in this brave, new world will be an important task: intellectual property rights will become as important to development of the Smart Grid as the poles and wires were to the old regime. Once the rules and standards have been established, regulators can then mediate between the participants in the marketplace.

Americans are growing increasingly concerned about the cost of energy, energy security, and preserving the environment. Making our energy grid smarter and more interactive is a way to work toward achieving many of these goals. However, it will require out-of-the box thinking. It will require us to stop putting band-aids on the problems of our existing grid and begin thinking more about the type of energy system we'd like to have tomorrow. ●

Bill Glahn is deputy commissioner at the Minnesota Department of Commerce and director of the Office of Energy Security.



Don't just count my nose, count my opinions too

New Rochester affiliate creates opportunity for deepening community dialogue

by Karel Weigel and Sharon Tennis

The census form recently arrived in our mail boxes, and with it, the promise that our noses will once again be counted. This spring, Rochester citizens have an opportunity to have their opinions counted as well, by becoming involved with the new Citizens League Rochester affiliate.

Sheila Kiscaden, a former state senator from the Rochester area, has often observed that much of the input the state lawmakers receive comes from lobbyists paid to promote special interests. Even citizen advocates, while important contributors to the debate, often also represent specific interests, such as higher education, human services, and health care. In the Rochester area, citizens have long had opportunities to voice their opinions at community meetings, but less opportunity for more inclusive dialogue or, when needed, more in-depth study.

But just as all of us need to be counted for the census to create an accurate demographic picture of our country, it is important that we gather citizen perspectives from the whole community. We are excited about the Citizens League process, which is designed to capture those perspectives so that decisions that impact the whole community are reached through consensus and not insistence.

BUILDING BLOCKS

At the beginning of this process, two citizen-based groups reviewed existing models for citizen engagement, the City Club of Portland Ore. and the Citizens League. With its Minnesota connection and its record of accomplishment, the Citizens League model seemed a good fit for Rochester.

A core group of interested people who had been active in two local forerunner groups, Coffee and Conversation and the Citizens Coalition, was broadened to capture greater diversity in age, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. That group sought input from community leaders, and then, with help and support from the Citizens League

and a commitment from the local community, the Citizens League Rochester Affiliate officially launched last November.

So far, the affiliate's focus has intentionally mirrored the Citizen League's, including community discussions of two recent Citizens League projects, "Bridges to a Better Bottom Line: An Outside Look at Minnesota's Budget Dilemma" and "To the Source: Moving Minnesota's Water Governance Upstream." A Mind Opener breakfast in May focused on judicial selection.

In addition, the affiliate's recently completed strategic plan shares a common framework with the Citizens League plan, an approach that facilitates sharing information and leverages scarce resources. As an affiliate, we benefit from the Citizens League's experience, its policies, and procedures, and from the staff's patient guidance. In turn, we provide the Citizens League with a new avenue for thoughtful input and a greater outstate perspective.

AN ACCURATE PICTURE

Over its 150-year history, Rochester has earned a reputation for citizen interest and involvement as demonstrated by effective public/private partnerships that have helped create bricks and mortar infrastructure. These efforts, along with corresponding social initiatives, have helped fuel economic growth and development. Rochester maintains a high rate of job growth with low unemployment. But that doesn't tell the whole story.

Rochester's demographics can paint a somewhat misleading picture of a wholly-affluent community; the data mask a more complicated reality with a broad spectrum of economic challenges. High-paying jobs in health care, technology, and emerging bio-business development are supported by an equal or greater number of service sector jobs. The average income in Rochester is \$108,000, but nearly 30 percent of school children are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch. Rochester's home

ownership rate is high at 73 percent, but there were 329 foreclosures last year, with more expected this year. Despite the reputation of Rochester's world-renown medical facilities, the number of uninsured patients seeking medical and dental care at the Salvation Army Good Samaritan Health Clinics is increasing.

Rochester's population is becoming increasingly diverse, as well. Not long ago, non-white residents made up just over 2 percent of the population. Today, that number is 18 percent communitywide, and 26.5 percent in Rochester's public schools, where 65 different languages are spoken.

THE WORK AHEAD

Sustaining growth and economic development are key to Rochester's success and to its future. Several planning initiatives that will impact the community involve private sector business, public sector leadership, the education community, and citizens. The multidimensional nature of these projects requires communication across sectors and setting aside partisanship to focus on issues and policy development. The Citizens League's philosophy of common ground for the common good can offer an advantageous approach to these upcoming deliberations.

As a group, we are excited to have the opportunity to advance sound policy built on community consensus rather than partisan rhetoric. We can sum up our experience by quoting citizen activist Doris Haddock ("Granny D") who, at the age of 88, walked across America—skiing the last 90 miles!—to promote campaign finance reform. Her philosophy: "Democracy is not something you have—it's something you do!"

We agree. ●

Karel Weigel and Sharon Tennis co-chair the Citizens League Rochester affiliate. Weigel is a retired Mayo Clinic administrator and president-elect of the Rotary Club of Rochester. Tennis is a retired nurse administrator who served on the Rochester Citizens Coalition planning group.

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