Focus, coordinate workforce training

Workforce training efforts need more coordination and focus in order to keep our state competitive, according to the Citizens League. Its latest research report, From Jobs for Workers to Workers for Jobs: Better Workforce Training for Minnesota, followed six of work by a 35-person study committee.

Legislators face off on unicameral legislature

by Dave Chadwick

At the Citizens League’s October Mind-Opener series, members heard two sitting legislators weigh in on whether Minnesota should adopt a single house legislature.

Sen. Ember Reichgott Junge (DFL-New Hope) opened the series by noting that she has supported a single-house legislature for more than a decade. In her view, a unicameral legislature “eliminates the ‘third house,’ the committee committee, and therefore reduces the political playing that does go on.” The conference committee process, she argued, gives legislators the opportunity to avoid responsibility for

FAIM project builds assets

by Denise DeVaan

A four-year Family Assets for Independence in Minnesota (FAIM) pilot project will be launched in early 2000 to assist working poor Minnesotans to buy homes, pursue higher education or begin small businesses. The project can be likened to the Homestead Act or the GI Bill, because it helps families build wealth through asset accumulation, which, combined with increased income over time, will provide long-term economic independence. The asset accounts developed through FAIM can be considered the Individual Retirement Accounts for the working poor; they are known as Individual Development Accounts.

Arrange school so students want to learn

by Ted Kolderie

If Jack Frymier is correct—and he’s not alone in thinking what he does—Minnesota could usefully, actually, must, refocus its effort at improving public education.

Understand first: This is a person who has spent his life in public education—as a teacher, administrator, professor (at Ohio State University for about 25 years), researcher (a senior fellow at Phi Delta Kappa, the professional teaching society, for the past 15 years), and now a consultant. He has not been in the political controversies about reform. His work has been in teaching and learning, with teachers and with kids.

This is where education is failing, he says: in the relationship between teachers and students. This is where “improvement” has to focus.

Frymier had two long discussions in Saint Paul late in October, with groups of educators, legislators and others involved with efforts to improve education, looking to improve their understanding of where their efforts should now focus.

His case is straightforward:

• Students learn when they’re motivated to learn. If they want to learn, they will. If they don’t, you...
Shifting from jobs for workers to workers for jobs

by Lyle Wray

The stress on farm is real, but this is not yet '80s crisis

By most measures, Minnesota is doing very well. Businesses are booming, Employment and home ownership are at record levels. Crime is down. Our core cities are undergoing redevelopment. But we also know the recent downturn in the farm economy poses some critical challenges facing our state's long-term prosperity. Indeed, the same economic trends that are making things seem so good right now are setting up some fundamental challenges for Minnesota's businesses and farmers.

In 1998, the League focused public attention on one of the most significant long-term challenges facing Minnesota's economy when we released our report on the labor force each year. (The full report is available on the website at www.citizensleague.net.) At the same time that Minnesota is facing a long-term shortage of high-skill workers, the shortage of workers, especially at the high-skil level of the workforce, can choke off our state's growth and limit our long-term prosperity.

One central challenge is that many of the state's efforts remain stuck in old mindsets and set Minnesota's businesses and workers need to compete. Our tight labor market means that almost everyone is finding some kind of employment. Unfortunately, key position remains paying in high-skill, high-wage industries. And those who do find employment must lower end of the job market continue to struggle to make ends meet, despite a booming stock market and glowing news reports about explosively expanding businesses. In fact, the wage premium paid for skilled unskilled labor is rising rapidly.

The state's technical and community colleges, while coming up with some exemplary programs to prepare workers for jobs, have no real incentive to produce any particular training outcomes for the state's high-skilled openings. Strategic vacancies can go unfilled. At the K-12 level, students are not receiving the adequate career and guidance they need to make effective decisions. And at the university level, the governor's surplus of high-skilled occupations. Incumbent workers receive little attention from either the state's job training programs or the higher education system. And programs addressing downsizing workers efforts are spread out among multiple state agencies, local training providers and educational institutions. There is a lack of overall co-ordination and integration of any efforts together as part of any comprehensive state strategy.

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The task facing our state is to develop a strategic approach to seeing each other. Wim Fedgazette, released our report on the labor force each year. (The full report is available on the website at www.citizensleague.net.) At the same time that Minnesota is facing a long-term shortage of high-skill workers, the shortage of workers, especially at the high-skil level of the workforce, can choke off our state's growth and limit our long-term prosperity.

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Reichgott Jungreis stressed that a unicameral legislature would be more open and easier for citizens to follow and understand. "Very few people truly understand the rules of the bicameral system, and it is very hard for people to follow. This is a way to make it more simple and understandable for people with busy lives."

"[A unicameral legislature] holds me, as a legislator, more accountable to my constituents."

—Sen. Emil Reichgott Jungreis (DFL-New Hope)

Ray Tom Rukavina (DFL-Virginia) started off his presentation by stressing the importance of having two different houses to balance the legislative process. "We like to say in the House that you gave this a chance, but in the Senate, this is the white body. At the same time, legislators frequently blame legislative defeats in a bicameral system on the other house. "A unicameral legislature" I think, as a legislator, more accountable to my constituents.

The debate over unicameralism is expected to be a major topic in the 2000 session. A number of bills have already been introduced to propose constitutional amendments to establish a single-house legislature, and both the governor and legislative leaders have declared the issue a priority. If approved by the Legislature, a single-legislature amendment would be put to a vote in the 2000 general election.

Dave Chadwick is a research associate at the Citizens League.

Training

Continued from page 1

13 years in the Legislature that has not been conducive to the open legislative process. "We like to say in the Senate that we had a very open legislative process."

Rukavina questioned whether a bicameral legislature would need an "addressing unemployment by creating and increasing amount of training and resources that already exist. Unfortunately, K-12 counselors are overwhelmed with demands on their time. Asked to provide personal, academic, and career counseling to their students, they are often only able to deal with the very best and very worst students."

Faced with a lack of counselors, we need to encourage new ways to connect students with career information and resources. The League recommends giving students financial incentives, scholarships or work-study programs toward the goal of continuing to increase the skills of workers. Resources should also be reallocated toward identifying and filling workforce supply and skill gaps. We need to focus on the problems of today and tomorrow instead of the problems of yesterday.

What next? The League’s report comes at a critical time, as discussions are already underway with the state’s workforce training programs. Since last spring, a "unicameral" made of 30% share of discussions of DTEED, the Chancellor of MnSCU, and State 30% share of DTEED, the Chancellor of MnSCU, and State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) system will be taking the lead on this issue. One goal is to use its influence to change the legislative process. "If there is going to be a unicameral legislature, one goal is to use its influence to change the legislative process."

The success of this approach will depend on both strong support from the Governor and clear agreement from the Legislature to genuinely demand results from the existing training system.

Once a "training czar" is created, the Legislature should do what it has done in the past, make some small adjustments and conclude that the problem is solved. "If there is going to be a unicameral legislature, one goal is to use its influence to change the legislative process."

The Minnesota Workforce Development Study indicates that the workforce’s needs. The idea is that the state’s workforce training programs toward the goal of continuing to increase the skills of workers. Resources should also be reallocated toward identifying and filling workforce supply and skill gaps. We need to focus on the problems of today and tomorrow instead of the problems of yesterday. "If there is going to be a unicameral legislature, one goal is to use its influence to change the legislative process."

The full report is available on the web at cn1.leg.state.mn.us
The architect of Individual Development Accounts in the United States, Sherraden, whose book Assets and the Poor argues that both income and assets help people exit poverty, Traditional welfare transfer programs penalize people if they have assets. Yet, the accumulation of assets not only helps people build wealth, but is also vital for stabilizing communities. As the lobbyist who helped facilitate passage of the Family Assets for Independence Act, I see this as one of the most exciting projects that includes families and the public and private sectors in partnership. I have personally worked to reduce poverty through either programs or public policy advocacy for nearly 26 years. This project is by far the most exciting one on which I’ve worked.

Demonstration projects Several large-scale federal demonstration projects, including the Montana and the Montana/Arthur Foundation, funded a demonstration project sponsored by the Corporation for Enterprise Development in Washington, D.C. First-year results showed that participants exhibited public assistance, were more independent than nonparticipants, reduced consumer debt and secured their homes. Second-year results will be available in December.

In 1998, while the demonstration project was underway, Gov. Arne Carlson signed the state Family Assets for Independence Act in June and President Bill Clinton signed the federal legislation for Independence Act in October. Both laws authorized pilot projects and provided for federal grants ranging from $4,000 to $6,000, tuition for Minnesota higher education institutions ranging from $1,995 to $5,500, and $2,000 to $5,000 in federal funds over a five-year period for states that had already raised contributions of their own funds for the pilot projects. Minnesota’s pilot project received $500,000 in state funds, which matched the project’s $500,000 in federal funds.

Operation of the FAAM projects started Jan. 1.

How does FAAM work?
Low-wage earners below 185 percent of poverty must save earned income, which is matched at a three-to-one rate by the public and private sectors. Funds are matched as shown in the accompanying table, if an individual saves an average of $30 per month, the public and private sectors can accumulate up to $5,760 over four years, plus interest.

For comparison, home bought pay. For example, a person with income of $4,000 to $6,000, tuition for Minnesota higher education institutions ranging from $1,995 to $5,500, and $2,000 to $5,000 in federal funds.

Participants must graduate from a 28-hour financial strategies for success curriculum. The first 18 hours emphasize financial strategies for success, the choice of savings, investing, and financial planning topics. The last year, the participants must choose a 10- or more hour track on such topics as home ownership, higher education or small business start-up. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready. The Women Venture small business curriculums is nearly ready; the curriculums is nearly ready.
Twin Cities decline in inner cities, while suburbs grow

A recent report from the Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard University ranks the nation’s 40 largest cities according to population growth in the urban area, versus the surrounding suburbs, between 1990 and 1996. The results for Minneapolis/St. Paul are not encouraging. The Twin Cities is the only urban area to see a decline in population for the inner cities, while experiencing more than two percent growth in the surrounding suburbs.

Every other city experiencing similar suburban growth saw at least some growth in the inner city as well. For example, southern and western cities such as Charlotte, Dallas, Denver, Phoenix and Portland also saw more than two percent growth in their surrounding suburbs, but simultaneously experienced more than one percent growth in their urban cores.

Other cities experiencing negative city growth, including old industrial centers such as Boston, Buffalo, Cleveland, Detroit and Pittsburgh, were also seeing minimal suburban growth (less than one percent) compared to the more than two percent suburban growth the Twin Cities experienced.—Kris Lyndon Wilson.

If you’re interested in Minneapolis, you might want to look at a new magazine named, of all things, City Fathers, put out by David Pence, a medical doctor in Southeast Minneapolis, 612/341-2572. Its second issue (‘Who Speaks for the City?’ Fall ’99) sees a kind of golden era in municipal government in the quarter-century after 1945.

It’s emphatically the municipal city that interests Pence, which will puzzle those who’ve come to feel that the central city is now less relevant as a community than the neighborhood on the one hand and the metropolitan “city” on the other. But the magazine is worth a look.

Note especially the interview with Tommy Thompson, former city coordinator, who says, interestingly, that in the mid-’70s he really wanted to build a transit system internal to central Minneapolis; a kind of “horizontal elevator” that would let the central area grow while remaining coherent.—Ted Kolderie.

“Boiled down”, proponents’ case for the “unicameral” legislature is that there’s essentially no difference between the House and Senate now that both have to be elected simply by population.

Well, a friend responds, if differences are important to preserve the benefits of a two-house legislature, why not create some? He points to New Hampshire. There the House is very large: almost the size of the House in the U.S. Congress. In New Hampshire there is a House member for every 1,500 persons. Its Senate has about 23 members who sit at tables in a very small room. Different legislative dynamics, a different kind of debate.—T.K.

Despite talk about site-managed schools in Minneapolis, edicts from above continue to rule the schools. A recent one affecting Minneapolis schools is the move this year to put all the city high schools on the quarter system, replacing the previous trimester or semester systems. Only one of the seven schools, South High, was given a waiver to wait a year to put the quarter system into effect.

The move apparently came out of the district’s Office of Teacher and Instructional Services, which says the move is intended to make all the high schools consistent, since it’s otherwise difficult to track the credits of students who move often from school to school. It’s also intended to provide more frequent reporting to students’ parents.

Just how serious is the mobility problem in Minneapolis?

Preliminary figures gathered by Bob Burke of the district’s Student Accounting Office show an estimated K-12 enrollment for this fall of 47,178 and a 9-12 enrollment of 11,618 (including the seven public high schools and the public alternative schools).

Looking only at students who came into the district or transferred among schools after the first two partial weeks of school (i.e., starting Sept. 13) through Nov. 1, Burke’s preliminary figures show that 2,725 students entered the district or transferred from one Minneapolis public school to another. Transfers among schools accounted for 935 students during that time. This, then, does not include students whose entry into the district or transfer to another school was set over the summer or before Sept. 13. (School started Sept. 1.)

Students in grades 9-12 accounted for 266 of the 935 transfers taking place on Sept. 13 or after. They accounted for 1,283 of the 2,575 new students to Minneapolis public schools.

K-12 students entering the district or transferring among schools after Sept. 13 accounted for 5.7 percent of the district’s estimated K-12 enrollment. Those in grades 9-12 accounted for 13.3 percent of the district’s estimated 9-12 enrollment.

Certainly, the numbers suggest significant movement into the district and among schools by families arriving or making changes after the school year is underway.

But do they justify a top-down edict on grading periods that affects all students, for better or worse? Some teachers in the International Baccalaureate magnet program at Southwest High, for example, say the new quarter system does not work well for the advanced curriculum they are teaching and forces them to give a permanent grade to a student before the student has found his or her way in a class. (Under the old trimester system, parents received midtrimester grades, which gave an indication of the students’ progress, but were not part of their permanent record.) One teacher commented, “It’s just another case of changes being made without considering their effect on the high-achieving students.”

Perhaps the solution is to allow each high school to design an approach to grading periods that will work best for its various programs and student populations.—Dana Schroeder.

Somewhat surprisingly, the “accountability” issue with charter schools turns out to be more a problem with their sponsors than with the schools. The schools are willing to be accountable for performance; “the charter movement” is willing to see nonperforming schools closed. But the sponsors, most of them district boards of education, are failing to monitor performance. If there’s a crisis in some school and kids get hurt, whose fault is it then?

It’s an uncomfortable situation for sponsors. If a district board closed a charter school for poor student performance, people would ask how the board monitors its own schools and, if some are performing poorly, why those aren’t closed. The whole area of oversight—and not just for the charter schools—is a question the Legislature needs to come back to.—T.K.

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

New and returning members
Ruby Hunt
Jacques Koppel
Sue Matthews
John E. Meyer
Kirby Pitman
Stephen and Maureen Schenck
Catherine Shreves
John D. Taylor

Half-Price Sale!
The 1999 Public Affairs Directory is now available for $7.50 (plus postage and handling) instead of the regular $15. The 2000 PAD will be available in February. As a 1999 buyer, you will be notified in advance. Call 612-338-0791 to order.

Board approves workforce training report

At its October Board meeting, the Citizens League Board of Directors gave its approval to the League's latest policy report From Jobs for Workers to Workers for Jobs: Better Workforce Training for Minnesota (see article in Minnesota Journal). Now that the report is complete, efforts will shift towards publicizing and implementing its recommendations.

In the meantime, we would like to thank the more than thirty League members who served on the committee, as well as committee chair Roger Hale, for their time, effort and input.

Committee members included:
Roger Hale, Chair
Bill Aberman
Martin Adams
Dave Alden
Kelly Altmeyer
Jim Bartholomew
Wendy Brower
Bill Bramfield
Erv Chorn
Ken Dols
Ann Sheldon Duff
Todd Graham
Jean Hammink
Ed Howe
Dave Hutcheson
John Karr
Larry Kelley
Fred Knox
Pradeep Kotamraju
Rich Krohn
Thomas Limond
Gail Morrison
Dan Newman
Patrick O'Leary
Jim Roth
Dudley Ruch
Bernie Ruffenach
Elin Malmquist
Skinner
Denise Stephens
Steve Studt
Dale Swanson
Abigail Turner
Reede Webster
Ann Wynia
Nancy Zingale

League budget in the black for fiscal year 1999

The Citizens League ended fiscal year 1999 with a healthy operating surplus of $16,558. Operating revenue for the year was $518,268, up $19,112 (3.8%) from FY1998. Operating expenses for the year were $501,710, an increase of $10,423 (2.1%) over last year.

The League's overall financial health also improved considerably. Unrestricted net assets increased by $27,944 compared to a decline of $4,962 last year. Restricted assets were also up: $42,742 over FY98. Overall League net assets in FY99 increased by $70,686 compared to an increase of $8,748 in FY98. The surplus was driven primarily by special projects and earned income which together increased by more than $60,000 over last year and were $44,000 over budget expectations.

Despite the overall rosy picture there are some darker trends lurking. The League's historical sources of core support declined this year. Income from both individual dues and contributions dropped for the first time in nearly a decade. And general operating support from corporations continued its downward trend.

On the positive side, corporate support in the form of sponsorships soared last year. And on the individual side, income from the League's endowment fund increased by $2,000 to $5,465. The endowment fund balance stood at $181,481 as of August 31 compared to $124,807 the year before. In addition, the League has received planned gifts and pledges of nearly $500,000. The League's long-term financial health depends on continued growth of the endowment fund.

A copy of the League's FY1999 audit report is available from the League office.
Crime: Case Closed?
The November Mind-Opener series is examining what’s behind the current crime statistics. The news about crime is generally good; but are we in danger of becoming complacent? What’s behind the decline - demographics? the strong economy? better policing and/or prevention? What new opportunities do lower crime rates present? What’s the future of crime prevention? Join us as we take a closer look at crime in Minnesota.

Tuesday, November 9
Tom Johnson
President, Council on Crime and Justice

Tuesday, November 16
Charlie Weaver
Commissioner, MN Department of Public Safety

Tuesday, November 23
Bill Finney
St. Paul Police Chief

Tuesday, November 30
Amy Klobuchar
Hennepin County Attorney

All meetings in this series are from 7:30 - 8:30 a.m. at the University Club, 420 Summit Avenue, St. Paul. Cost is $10 for Citizens League members, $15 for non-members and includes a continental breakfast. Registrations can be made by calling (612)338-0791 or emailing info@citizensleague.net.

Next Month: Census 2000
The December Mind-Opener series will examine the 2000 Census. Questions to be explored include: How has the size, age, ethnicity, wealth and geographic location of Minnesota’s population changed over the last ten years? What will the new census numbers mean for the state? How will they impact the redistricting of state legislative seats? Finally, we will examine the issue of the undercount — what segments of the population are most likely to be undercounted? What are the ramifications of an undercount and how do we prevent it? Tentative dates for the series are December 7, 14 and 21 at the Zuhrah Shrine Center. So pencil us in on your calendar and watch your mail for details.

Executive Director Lyle Wray has already started spreading the word on the League’s new workforce training report including a recent presentation to the Development Corporation of Austin, Minnesota and a joint presentation with workforce training committee chairman Roger Hale at the Humphrey Institute’s 1999 Policy Conference.

Lyle recently spent a weekend in Washington D.C. convening a meeting of the regional civic organization network at the National Civic League annual meeting. He also made a brief side trip to Jacksonville, Florida as a resource speaker for a Citizen League-like study committee on regionalism.

Research Associate Kris Lyndon Wilson has been serving on the planning committee for the upcoming Intergenerational Dialogue on School Integration. The event is being organized by the Minnesota Minority Education Partnership and co-sponsored by a number of community groups, including the Citizens League. The event is designed to begin a discussion about where the Twin Cities has been and should go in terms of school integration, within the context of the new state desegregation rule which relies on voluntary efforts. All League members and the general public are encouraged to attend. Check out the yellow flyer inserted in this month’s Journal for more information about the event.

Research Associate Dave Chadwick is participating in planning activities for the League of Women Voters of Minnesota’s 2000 Citizens in Action conference. The annual conference provides citizen activists with advice on organizing and influencing policy-makers. Dave will also be presenting at one of the conference’s workshops on influencing the legislative process at the federal level.

In an attempt to keep it fresh, up-to-date and useful, the League’s website will be receiving a new look during the month of November. Check it out at www.citizensleague.net.

You’ll still find our latest policy reports, articles from the Minnesota Journal, and information about upcoming Mind-Opener meetings and other special events. The site also includes information about League Board members and other regional civic organizations from around the country. We’ve also added bios of our staff members. Send an email and tell us what you think.

Have an idea for a Mind-Opener series?
Call us at 612-338-0791 or email us at info@citizensleague.net