



JOURNAL

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Common ground. Common good.

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Closing the participation gap for Twin Cities youth

Three urban colleges come together to launch
the Power of YOU demonstration project

by Dr. Irene H. Kovala and Dr. Elizabeth Yeh

In his 2004 State of the State speech, Governor Tim Pawlenty asked the Citizens League to strategically re-think the future of higher education in Minnesota. In response, the Citizens League assembled an impressive taskforce which, in late 2004, issued the report “Trouble on the Horizon” outlining a new vision for higher education in our state.

In its report, the taskforce’s first recommendation called for increasing expectations in high school and in higher education, specifically raising standards and expectations to a K-14 set of outcomes and establishing the goal “that every Minnesota high school graduate achieve a minimum two years of higher education.” The report painted a particularly stark assessment for students of color—most of whom live and attend school in Minneapolis and Saint Paul—noting that only 3 percent of Black and American Indian ninth-graders and 5 percent of Hispanic ninth-graders will earn a bachelors degree within 10 years.

Others have presented similar findings that illustrate Minnesota’s achievement gap among students of color. The highly regarded 2005 Brookings Institution study, “Mind the Gap,” commissioned by the CEO-led Itasca Project, stated that “despite overall economic strength, the Minneapolis/Saint Paul region has three stark and

growing socioeconomic gaps—race, class, and place—that threaten our economic future.” A report by the National Center for Public Policy in Education, “Measuring Up 2004: Minnesota Report Card,” found that Minnesota’s achievement gap costs the state’s economy \$1.4 billion each year in lost income. And the *Education Week*



Power of YOU students from MCTC and Saint Paul College attended a hearing at the Capitol last May where three Power of YOU students testified. The Legislature appropriated \$600,000 for the program for fiscal year 2009.

report, “Diplomas Count, Ready for What? Preparing Students for College, Careers, and Life after High School,” ranked Minnesota among the top seven states for overall graduation rates, but among the bottom five states for graduation rates for African American and Asian students, and among the bottom 20 states for American Indian student graduation.

As the three public institutions of higher education in Minnesota dedicated to serving the urban core, Minneapolis Community and Technical College (MCTC), Saint Paul College, and Metropolitan State University took the challenge of closing this achievement gap to heart, and in January 2006 collectively launched a bold initiative called the *Power of YOU*. With significant philanthropic support from many of Minnesota’s largest corporations and others, the *Power of YOU* guarantees recent graduates of the Minneapolis and Saint Paul public (charter and alternative) schools two years of college tuition-free, plus an array of

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CONNECTIONS

Building a League of Citizens



Students from the Public Achievement Group at St. Bernard's School in Saint Paul work with members of the Citizens League's Energy and the Environment Action Group to construct a rain garden at the school. The rain gardens, funded by the Capitol Region Watershed District, will help to filter rainwater runoff before it enters the storm sewer system, reducing pollutants flowing into area lakes and rivers.

Citizens League Annual Meeting

Thursday, November 20

Reception 5 p.m. | Program 6:30 p.m. | Dessert 7:30 p.m.

The Depot Great Hall

225 Third Street South, Minneapolis

Admission is free and refreshments will be served

Today, we're facing huge policy challenges, but these challenges actually provide a unique opportunity for creativity in policy-making. The Citizens League's combination of imagination and pragmatism has been behind some of Minnesota's greatest innovations in the past, and we need more of it today.

Join us for the annual meeting as we celebrate the past year, look ahead to next year, and discuss new ways to get involved in Citizens League efforts.

Go to www.citizensleague.org for more information and to register.

2009 Board Nominees

The following nominees will be presented as a slate for member vote at the annual meeting:

Acooa Lee
Kathy Mock
Jeff Peterson
Zach Pettus

Jennifer Ford Reedy
Judith Titcomb
Diane Tran

Find out more about the nominees at www.citizensleague.org

Get involved in a policy review group

Members needed to participate in policy review groups to reevaluate our historic policy work in three areas:

- Energy efficiency and CO2 emissions control for Minnesota
- Charter schools
- Aging services

For more information or to volunteer, contact Bob DeBoer at bdeboer@citizensleague.org

Close to reaching our 2008 membership goal!

The Pohlad Family Foundation has challenged the Citizens League to grow our membership to 2,000 by the end of the year. When we meet that goal, they will reward us with a \$15,000 challenge grant.

We're almost there—fewer than 50 members to go! Here's how you can help us close this gap.

- Don't forget to renew your membership when you receive a notice in the mail.
- Your spouse or roommate can join for free. Contact Catherine Wood at cwood@citizensleague.org or 651-293-0575 ext.10 to add a second person to your membership.
- Give a gift membership to a friend or colleague. Contact Catherine, or give online by visiting www.citizensleague.org/join and clicking "Give a Gift Membership."

Your financial support matters!

As you have seen from reading recent issues of the *Minnesota Journal*, the Citizens League has made a real impact on Minnesota policy this past year. We have an equally ambitious policy agenda for 2009, with projects on poverty, water policy, aging services, regional competitiveness, and more.

You should have just received our annual fundraising appeal in the mail. We urge you to consider a contribution at any level, from \$25 to \$2,500. The financial support of members like you enables us to achieve our mission of building civic imagination and civic capacity in Minnesota.

Contact us with questions, or go to www.citizensleague.org/contribute to support our work. Thank you!



Less than 30 plus greater than 70

Can solving this generational equation lead to better public policy outcomes for all of us?

by Sean Kershaw

How do you define public policy?

As someone who is paid to know the answer to this question, I am often unsure myself, and I think that the common definition of public policy (what government does) prevents us from having an impact on our public problems and priorities.

Who is the “public” in public policy?

Usually, it’s the government. I am on the board of an organization that spends tens of millions of dollars annually on social service programs and our discussions about public policy are primarily about how and when we get involved in advocacy at the Capitol. While these are productive and necessary conversations, a broader definition of public policy would help this organization better leverage all the ways it already impacts public policy.

Pose these two questions to someone from the emerging “millennial” generation, those under age 30, or the “greatest generation,” those over age 70. The difference in their answers is telling. It can also be instructive for all of us as we think about how to improve the practice—and outcomes—of public policy.

Our public policy generation gap

I talked recently with an extremely talented 24-year-old nonprofit leader who participated in a multigenerational panel discussion about public policy. He realized he didn’t have a workable definition of the term public policy, either.

He saw all institutions—schools and congregations and nonprofits—as necessary participants in public policy and creators of the common good. He wasn’t waiting for the government or anyone else to help him decide when and where to do something. He and three friends started Students Today Leaders Forever, a rapidly growing nonprofit that promotes student leadership through community service.

But his generation has lost faith in both government and politics as the means by which we solve public problems, and

Public policy is the choices and strategies that all individuals and all institutions make that impact Minnesotans today and tomorrow.

while they are enthusiastic about having an impact, they don’t necessarily have an understanding of how systems and politics can work to produce long-term change.

On the other hand, long-term members of the Citizens League have an amazing understanding of how these public outcomes happen: the mechanics and cause and effect of public policy. They approach the analysis of public issues from a thoughtful and systemic point of view that has helped them to avoid jumping to easy but sometimes totally misguided solutions. These members practiced politics well, provided visionary leadership, and succeeded because they understood the proper role of government and business at a particular time.

If we only focus on government, we risk downplaying the new role that institutions other than government can and must play right now. I sense that corporations are reengaging in public policy in part because they are growing concerned about the willingness of the generations coming behind them, like mine, to develop the systemic solutions we need to solve our mounting policy challenges.

At this unique time in our history, when so many people from both of these generations are engaged and interested, I think it’s possible—and necessary—to redefine public policy in a way that combines the civic energy and institutional creativity of the emerging generation with the systemic and political wisdom of our founding generation at the Citizens League.

The “public” in public policy

I believe that public policy is a principled course of action that benefits the people. It is the choices and strategies that all individuals and all institutions make that impact Minnesotans today and tomorrow.

“Course of action” refers to the fact that policy is always about making choices, for example, the mix of spending on roads and transit needed to address congestion and promote economic growth. Rules, laws, and policies in all types of organizations guide this process. In transportation, government, employers, drivers, and riders all play governing roles in decision making.

“Principled” refers to the fact that these decisions are guided by a set of values. At the Citizens League, we are guided by our civic values: human capacity, democracy, active citizenship, political competence, and institutional sustainability.

“The people” simply refers to the fact that public policy both reflects the public’s interest and serves the larger public good. The public in public policy isn’t the public sector. It’s all of us in Minnesota, in all sorts of institutions, organizations, and generations.

A new equation for public policy

As long as public policy is something done “out there,” under a beautiful marble dome at the Capitol, citizens will be mostly spectators and commentators rather than actors shaping public policy.

We need to harness the political and analytical wisdom of our greatest generation, and the enthusiasm and institutional entrepreneurship of the millennial generation, and bring them together to create a new civic definition of public policy, a definition that recognizes that the choices each of us makes daily under our own roofs that offer real opportunities for us to engage in public policy—and to have real and meaningful impact on Minnesota as we enter a new generation in our state’s history. ●

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Crawford v. Marion County Board of Elections

Indiana's voter photo ID law survives challenge, but the Supreme Court leaves the door open on the issue of voting restrictions

by Laughlin McDonald

In a sharply divided opinion, the U.S. Supreme Court last April upheld the constitutionality of Indiana's controversial photo ID law for in-person voting. The Indiana law requires that voters, with few exceptions, produce a current photo ID issued either by the United States or the state of Indiana before voting.

The Indiana law, one of the strictest in the nation, is at the heart of the battle over voter ID requirements. Indiana and Georgia are currently the only two states to require voters to provide photo IDs; four other states have statutes requiring a photo ID but allow voting without it if the voter meets other requirements. Several states, including Minnesota, are considering or have considered similar voter photo ID laws.

Proponents argue photo ID laws are needed to prevent fraudulent voting. Opponents charge the laws discriminate against low-income, elderly, and minority voters who are less likely to have a photo ID, and that photo ID requirements amount to partisan voter suppression because those same groups tend to skew Democratic.

In the Indiana case, *Crawford v. Marion County Board of Education*, the Supreme Court ruled 6-3 that the Indiana law is constitutional and does not impose an unjustified burden on any specific class of

voters, and that the state had a legitimate interest in preventing fraudulent in-person voting. The Court's dissenting justices argued that the Indiana statute imposes significant and impermissible burdens on thousands of voters who are mainly poor, elderly, or disabled.

The Court's ruling in *Crawford* did leave the door open to additional challenges to voter photo ID laws if plaintiffs can show that such requirements impose an excessive burden.

Ballot box history

After the Civil War and during and after Reconstruction, it was Democrats in the South who led the charge to restrict access to the ballot, using tactics such as literacy tests, poll taxes, onerous registration requirements, and the white primary. Although these measures were adopted for partisan and racially discriminatory purposes, (i.e., to take the ballot out of the hands of newly enfranchised blacks), these efforts frequently masqueraded as "good government" reform and high-minded attacks on election fraud. As one historian has put it, "legalized restrictions on Negro voting...reflected a movement for purifying the electoral process in southern states."

Today, Republican state legislatures are taking the lead in pursuing voter photo

ID laws. The Indiana law was enacted in 2005 by a Republican-controlled legislature and signed in to law by a Republican governor. Supporters argue the law is needed to combat voter fraud and insure voter confidence in the integrity of the electoral process, although no one in the history of Indiana has ever been charged or convicted of the crime of fraudulent in-person voting.

In fact, substantiated claims of voter fraud are extremely rare, according to a 2007 study for nonpartisan organization Project Vote by Barnard College Associate Professor Lorraine C. Minnite.

Minnite concluded that "[t]he claim that voter fraud [knowingly and willing voting illegally] threatens the integrity of American elections is itself a fraud," and that "the use of baseless voter fraud allegations for partisan advantage has become the exclusive domain of Republican party activists."

In December 2006, the U.S. Elections Assistance Commission concluded that many of the allegations of voter fraud made in reports and books "were not substantiated." Overall, the commission found "impersonation of voters is probably the least frequent type of fraud because it is the most likely type of fraud to be discovered, there are stiff penalties...and it is an inefficient method of influencing an election."

While the evidence of voter fraud is scant, there is evidence that voter photo ID requirements put a disproportionate burden on low-income, elderly, and minority voters. A 2006 national survey of voting-age Americans sponsored by the Brennan Center for Justice at the New York University School of Law concluded that as many as 11 million American of voting age do not have government-issued photo identification.

Twenty-five percent of African American citizens of voting age lack a government-issued photo ID, compared with just 8 percent of white citizens. Using the 2000 census data, that translates to more than 5.5 million African American adult citizens without photo ID.

Citizens earning less than \$35,000 a year are more than twice as likely to lack current government-issued photo ID as those earning more than \$35,000. And 18



percent of Americans age 65 or older—more than 6 million people—do not have such ID.

Challenging the Indiana law

Two separate groups filed legal challenges to the Indiana voter photo ID law, the Democratic Party, and the American Civil Liberties Union acting on behalf of two elected officials and several nonprofit organizations representing elderly, poor, disabled, and minority voters.

The district court dismissed both complaints. A divided court of appeals affirmed the lower court's decision, although the appeals court acknowledged there is "[n]o doubt most people who do not have photo ID are low on the economic ladder and thus, if they do vote, are more likely to vote for Democratic than Republican candidates," and that "the new law injures the Democratic Party."

In a dissenting opinion, Appeals Court Judge Terrence Evans said the "law will make it significantly more difficult for some eligible voters...to vote—and this group is mostly comprised of people who are poor, elderly, minorities, disabled, or some combination thereof." He described the photo ID law as "a not-too-thinly-veiled attempt to discourage election-day turnout by certain folks believed to skew Democratic."

However, a majority of the justices on the three-member court of appeals said that the right of individual voters was not burdened by the photo ID law because "a vote in a political election rarely has any instrumental value, since elections for political office at the state and federal level are never decided by just one vote."

In its ruling, the appeals court ignored decisions of the Supreme Court which have invalidated election practices, not because a plaintiff's vote would have been instrumental, but because, as the Court ruled in the 1989 decision, *Board of Estimate of City of New York v. Morris*, the right to vote is "personal" and "a value in itself... without more and without mathematically calculating his power to determine the outcome of election."

In the 1973 case, *Gray v. Sanders*, in which the Court first used the phrase "one

person, one vote," the Court stressed that all who participate in an election "are to have an equal vote."

The fact that those disadvantaged by Indiana's photo ID law might not have been instrumental in determining the outcome of an election should be irrelevant if

In addition, the lead opinion acknowledges that it would be unconstitutional if the state required voters to pay a fee or tax to obtain a photo ID, or if partisan considerations "had provided the only justification for a photo identification requirement."

Overall, the commission found "impersonation of voters is probably the least frequent type of fraud because it is the most likely type of fraud to be discovered, there are stiff penalties ... and it is an inefficient method of influencing an election."

the law burdens their personal, and equal, right to vote.

The Supreme Court rules

In *Crawford v. Marion County*, the Court, in a lead opinion written by Justice John Paul Stevens and joined by Justices John G. Roberts Jr. and Anthony M. Kennedy, affirmed the decision of the court of appeals. It acknowledged that "[t]he record contains no evidence of any such [in-person voter] fraud actually occurring in Indiana at any time in its history." But because of the limited evidence before it of people who lacked a photo ID or who would be unable to vote in person, the Court concluded "we do not know the magnitude of the impact [of the Indiana law]." Accordingly, the evidence "is not sufficient to support a facial attack on the validity of the entire statute."

Whether better evidence of the impact of the law could support a subsequent facial challenge, the Stevens opinion leaves open the possibility of an "as applied" challenge, noting that "the burden may not be justified as to a few voters."

Thus, if voters could show that a photo ID requirement effectively prohibited them from voting, or imposed a severe burden, they should be able to prevail on an "as applied" challenge.

Tipping the balance

In its determination, the Court applied the traditional balancing test used in challenges to election laws and held that "however slight" the burden of the photo ID requirement may appear, "it must be justified by relevant and legitimate state interests 'sufficiently weighty to justify the limitation.'"

Indiana had a legitimate or important interest in preventing election fraud, the Court said, and cited three "flagrant examples of such fraud in other parts of the country." One involved the William (Boss) Tweed election in New York City of 1868 which involved multiple voting and not in-person voter impersonation. A second example involved "ghost voters" in a 2004 election in Washington. In that case, however, only one person was actually found to have committed in-person voting fraud. In the third example, involving the 2003 Democratic primary for East Chicago mayor, the fraud involved absentee voting, not in-person voter impersonation.

Justice Antonin Scalia, joined by Justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel A. Alito Jr., rejected both facial and as applied challenges to the photo ID law. "I prefer to decide these cases on the grounds that petitioners'

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Redefining poverty and reframing our ideas about causes and solutions

The Citizens League seeks to sharpen the focus of its policy work on poverty through a series of public conversations

by Bob DeBoer

In September, the Citizens League hosted three initial conversations to explore ways we can best focus our efforts on policies to address poverty in Minnesota. Those in attendance were mainly from government, higher education, and non-profit organizations, along with some interested citizens. In this piece we provide a summary of those discussions which we will use to focus a second round of discussions, one we hope will engage more people and institutions (community centers, churches, businesses, schools and others) directly impacted by or connected to poverty.

There was also a strong sentiment that poverty is accepted by the public, and a general feeling that most Minnesotans don't view poverty as an urgent problem because they have little or no interaction with people living in poverty.

Framing the issue

We approach these conversations with particular goals in mind. As the process continues we will ask all participants to:

- Contribute to problem definitions and solutions that reflect the current experiences of people in poverty.
- Share and learn from one another and be open to exploring the implications of various courses of action through a transparent process that expects all participants to engage in decision making.
- Identify actionable next steps, where all participants connect their self-interest with the common interest to evaluate outcomes and determine ways to work together.
- Strive to make progress on the next steps by advancing and sustaining recommendations in the institutions where they have the authority and influence to act.

About 40 people participated in the initial conversations, although many more indicated interest. Nearly 70 people took an online survey that accompanied the invitation. On our website and at the meetings we asked people to comment on what they think are some of the misconceptions about poverty and some of the reasons why we haven't been able to "solve" poverty in Minnesota. The breadth of the discussions was startling. The following excerpts represent some of the most compelling thoughts that emerged.

There was broad acknowledgement that "we are all in this together" and that poverty's effects ripple out with great impact through our education and health care systems. Yet there was also

a strong sentiment that poverty is accepted by the public, and a general feeling that most Minnesotans don't view poverty as an urgent problem because they have little or no interaction with people living in poverty.

Our increasing social isolation leads us to wildly different perceptions about poverty, and many people have done a very effective job at insulating themselves from poverty.

There is confusion about how we define poverty. As a society, we identify poverty that is generational, transitional, rural, urban, elderly (which is mainly based on disability), and cultural under one umbrella, but the solutions are different.

Some participants identified two types of poverty.

- Lack of economic resources. This could be called a conference table view of poverty (housing, taxes, jobs, etc.). This includes the official measures that define poverty.
- Lack of family and community structure. This could be called the kitchen table view of poverty (alcohol and drug abuse, attitudes, uninvolved parenting). You may have more economic resources than some, but can still be in poverty when others with similar economic resources are not. This includes lack of ability to network in the community.

There was a strong sense that we must significantly reframe our ways of approaching poverty and that the Citizens League could play an important role in changing the approach.

One key question that emerged is whether the goal of this process is to eliminate poverty or to make the effects of poverty less onerous.

The root causes of poverty

The Minnesota Council of Churches has identified four ways to view the causes of poverty: individual decisions or situations, structural and systemic causes, community situations, and exploitation. These causes were discussed at the third Citizens League conversation; that group thought they were well-organized and thoughtful and could be one way to frame the ideas. Here is how the Citizens League conversations might relate to the four areas.

INDIVIDUAL DECISIONS OR SITUATIONS:

People with mental and physical disabilities as well as chemical dependency and personal choices/decisions. The Citizens League discussions most related to this point were about belief systems and individual character.

Group comments

- How much poverty stems from mental illness and chemical dependency?
- Individual character is a factor in poverty. Does poverty cause people to do bad things? Are people poor because they make bad choices?
- There is a set of beliefs held by some that poor people choose poverty or are to blame for their poverty due to laziness or some moral failing.
- Antipathy toward government; a belief that charitable institutions should be responsible for solving poverty.
- People think we spend more on "welfare" than we do.

- Poor people would prefer to rely on government subsidies.
- There is a “floor” to our current system. We generally will not tolerate people starving in front of us, but other than that there is not widespread agreement about reducing or eliminating poverty and what that means.
- Most people don’t think that people who work are poor.

Where the Citizens League might focus its work

- The connection between poverty and health (mental and physical).
- Developing a common baseline understanding of poverty. We get stuck paying for the consequences, but don’t have this basic agreement about poverty.
- Look at what types of incentives are imbedded in current policies. Do they encourage “good” choices? Or push people to make “bad” choices?

STRUCTURAL AND SYSTEMIC CAUSES

Public policies and other systemic reasons that either cause people to be in poverty or keep them there. The Citizens League discussions most related to this point were about economic and government systems.

Group comments

- Does poverty serve a purpose in our society? Are we really trying to get rid of it?
- Poverty is useful to those who wish to keep wages low, because it creates a cheap labor pool; it is sustained by a series of decisions that are imbedded in this economic equation.
- A portion of our economic system is predatory. When you are poor everything costs more.



- Programs are not set up to move people out of poverty. Money goes mainly to agencies and institutions, not to people. Many of the policies address immediate needs, not long-term needs.
- There is an overall fragmentation of programs and systems. Disincentives to earn: government programs and the tax code actually stop people in their tracks when they try to work their way out of poverty.
- Food support in Minnesota is a \$1 billion industry. The poverty “industry” has built up over the last few decades and has institutionalized our approaches to addressing poverty whether they are effective or not.
- Nonprofits are filling a void that is not being filled by government and business, making this harder to assess.

Where the Citizens League might focus its work

- The amount we spend on the current model of poverty reduction. This could also include data and costs from our criminal justice system.
- Compare the cost of our current policies to the cost of establishing a minimum income.
- Generational poverty, not just the transitional issues.
- The fragmentation of our systems and programs. Change the disincentives to earn.

COMMUNITY SITUATIONS

Concentrated communities of poverty where there is a prevalence of low wages, high prices, crime, decreased access to education, transportation, and living wage jobs. The Citizens League discussions that related to this point were about where concentrations of poverty occur.

Group comments

- Where are the concentrations? Poverty has many different forms.
- Where does the nexus of poverty occur across issues and sectors? How do we engage to find that?
- Recognition of poverty within different cultural groups. Individual empowerment needs to occur within cultural groups.
- School readiness is something that is a problem for all poor kids. It cuts across race.

Where the Citizens League might focus its work

- Identify the concentrations and start the outreach to connect with those impacted.
- Find the nexus between sectors and issues.
- We must “cross-auger the silos.” All the work done in different policy silos needs to be organized differently to leverage the resources.
- Continue to explore the frame of children. We have different standards for children than we do for adults. We want children to have food, clothing, shelter, and more.
- Look more closely at the early childhood work pursued by the Minnesota Early Learning Foundation. This could have major community impact in the long term.

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Redefining poverty

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EXPLOITATION

The realities of race, gender, class, age, and other ways in which certain types of people are excluded from equal pay, housing, and other advantages that privileged people just do not have to notice. The Citizens League discussions most related to this point were about institutional practices.

Group comments

(The first four bullets under the structural and systemic causes heading also apply to institutional practices.)

- Poverty is not just a symptom of other causes. Part of the cause is a disease fueled by racism and classism. This leads to large disparities in things like health care.
- The perception of poverty is built on prevailing community standards. These standards imbed the racism and classism that feed the disease.
- There are policies that support institutional racism everywhere and until those policies are examined within the institutions where they exist, we will have difficulty making progress.
- Having a criminal record is a growing factor in poverty. Electronic records, etc. make this a growing impact. Just finding employers who will work with people who have a criminal record is a challenge.
- We are one of the worst areas in terms of segregation. Look at the Twin Cities Compass “disparity of place” information.
- There are two Minnesotas, one that is well-educated and those who aren’t doing well. African Americans are most likely to be under the poverty line. We are fourth highest on this measure in the country!

Where the Citizens League might focus its work

- Identify racism and classism in our institutions.
- The intersection of race and poverty. That will force us to focus on system failures.
- Don’t shy away from the philosophical. What is the claim that we each have on each other? What is the cultural framework of poverty?

Outside of the four areas listed above, participants posed more general questions such as, “How do we transform the way people look at poverty?” and “How do we focus on shifting the focus to prosperity?” One suggestion was for the Citizens League to focus on the removal of barriers and the creation of opportunity in its poverty efforts. Some of the barriers and opportunities listed below could also fit in the four areas above.

Barriers

- Government policies that require poverty.
- Government policies that impede movement out of poverty.
- Obstacles to equal access to opportunity.
- The intersection of poverty with health care and child care. You can’t work your way out! (Disincentives to earn)

Opportunities

- We do need to think about the institutions that are effective and focus there.
- Building wealth is a mentality. There are a lot of people who experience poverty only as a stage of life to get somewhere else. What is the modeling for kids to make this more often the expectation?



- Look across sectors and issues. Where is the nexus and how do we engage? Find the nexus.
- Recognition of poverty within different cultural groups. Individual empowerment needs to occur within cultural groups.
- How do we mainstream ideas like micro-credit?

Citizens League staff posed an additional question at the last two sessions: “Should we administer fewer programs and provide more cash?”

Group comments

- When dealing with generational and cultural poverty, it would take a lot of mentoring. The extra cash would get blown in a month and then where would we be?
- If you think about the chaos of the current structure, more cash is a better approach, but there is a political barrier. There is a limit to how much cash you can offer when compared to factors like minimum wage, etc.
- The cash needs to be on the job side. Wage subsidies rather than minimum wage. The real trade-off is jobs vs. social services. So far social services have been the dominant model.
- More cash is a better approach. People don’t trust government programs.
- Cash is a non-starter at the Legislature. We have block grants where 27 percent is cash and that has not been raised since 1987.

What’s next?

The Citizens League is organizing a second round of conversations to further explore the issue of poverty from a greater diversity of perspectives and to identify the areas where we can be most effective. To view a list of those who participated in the initial conversations and for more information on upcoming opportunities to participate, visit www.citizensleague.org. ●

Bob DeBoer is the Director of Policy Development at the Citizens League. He can be reached at bdeboer@citizensleague.org.

Power of you

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intensive student support services. The *Power of YOU* has four main goals:

- Erase the real or perceived barriers to enrolling in higher education.
- Increase enrollment of low-income students and students of color.
- Increase retention rates for low-income students and students of color.
- Demonstrate to public policy-makers, through measurable results, the need for a long-term public commitment to underserved students in higher education.

Effective strategies yield results

Saint Paul-based Wilder Research conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the *Power of YOU* and found that, in its first two years, the program substantially boosted the enrollment of students who have traditionally been underrepresented in post-secondary education, especially low-income students and Black or African American students. Beyond access, the Wilder Research data suggest that, "*Power of YOU* students

were more likely to remain enrolled in college during their first year to year and a half compared to their peers or prior cohorts [of recent high school graduates at *Power of YOU* schools]." Enrollment of new graduates from Minneapolis and Saint Paul public high schools more than doubled at Saint Paul College, MCTC, and Metropolitan State University, from 300 in 2005 to 710 in 2007. Specifically:

- Low-income student enrollment from the Minneapolis and Saint Paul schools increased by 115 percent in the first two years of the *Power of YOU*, an increase of nearly 500 students.
- Enrollment of students of color increased almost 150 percent, an increase of more than 500 students.
- *Power of YOU* students had higher retention rates than the comparison group: 85 percent compared to 72 percent from first fall to first spring; and 64 percent compared to 50 percent from first fall to second fall.

We have more work to do, but we believe these results are an important first step toward improving access to higher education for low-income students and students of color in Minnesota.

The Wilder Research report also identified some areas of concern, however, including inadequate preparation for college and academic progress while in college. A higher proportion of *Power of YOU* students from the combined 2006 and 2007 cohorts took developmental courses than the comparison group (74% vs. 66%). In addition, the report also identified the academic progress of the *Power of YOU* program participants as an area of concern.

"Even though the program requires students to be enrolled full time, *Power of YOU* students were making slow progress in earning enough credits to graduate," the report concluded. "This, of course, was related to their under preparation for college and their consequent need to take developmental courses which don't count toward graduation. To illustrate, after two years, *Power of YOU* students had earned just over half of the credits needed for an associate's degree. *Power of YOU* students also

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Saint Paul-based Wilder Research conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the *Power of YOU* and found that, in its first two years, the program substantially boosted the enrollment of students who have traditionally been underrepresented in post-secondary education.

Precious deVries, a *Power of YOU* student, registering for her first semester of college. A graduate of Menlo Park Alternative School, she was not planning to go to college, but then she heard about the *Power of YOU* program. Now, after two and a half years at MCTC, she is getting ready to transfer to Augsburg, Hamline or the University of Minnesota next spring. She has been accepted to all three colleges and is waiting to find out about financial aid and scholarships.



Power of you

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struggled to perform well academically. Slightly over half were in good academic standing at the end of their first year of college.”

New horizons and innovation

In the second year of the *Power of YOU* program, new efforts at MCTC were made to test 11th grade students in Minneapolis public schools and assess their readiness for college-level work early enough to intervene with appropriate curricular work. And a new program, Jump Start, now provides juniors an opportunity to take college classes that count towards high school graduation requirements and better prepare them for college. Students have the opportunity to take developmental credits co-taught by high school teachers and college faculty the summer preceding their senior year, and during their senior year. The first results have been positive: 95 percent of Jump Start participants have received dual high school and college credit in at least one course, and 65 percent enrolled in college directly after graduation.

While the success of the *Power of YOU* program is laudable, more can and needs to be done to improve students' readiness for college and their ability to succeed in college. The Wilder Research report highlighted several areas to focus on:

- Strengthen relationships with the high schools.
- Balance pre-enrollment with post enrollment services.
- Provide more help to students with personal issues.
- Consider helping students find ways to cover their living expenses while at college.
- Improve the service learning component of the program.
- Continue to develop the community partnerships supporting the program.
- Enhance the collaboration with the three partnering colleges.

In response to the report, MCTC has funded a resource and referral services coordinator to assist students in identifying outside

resources to help with things like housing, transportation, and child care which can disrupt college attendance. Additionally, tutoring support and a study hall requirement have been built into the *Power of YOU* program to strengthen academic performance.

Based on its initial success, the Minnesota Legislature approved the first direct appropriation for the *Power of YOU* during the last session, \$600,000 for fiscal year 2009. The *Power of YOU* results should encourage all higher education institutions to take the bold steps necessary to educate all of our citizenry. While challenges exist in successful preparation for and progress toward the attainment of a college degree, it is evident that given the opportunity, *all* students can and will benefit from post-secondary access. ●

Dr. Irene H. Kovala is the Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs for Minneapolis Community and Technical College. Dr. Elizabeth Yeh is the college's Director of Institutional Research.

Voter ID

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premise [that the law imposes a burden] is irrelevant and that the burden at issue is minimal and justified,” Scalia wrote.

Justices David H. Souter, Ruth Bader Ginsberg, and Stephen G. Breyer dissented. Justice Souter, in an opinion joined by Justice Ginsburg, concluded that the challenged law was facially unconstitutional because it “threatens to impose nontrivial burdens on the voting rights of tens of thousands of the State’s citizens;” it “is unconstitutional under the balancing standard;” those without photo ID “are likely to be in bad shape economically;” the requirement imposes “particular burdens . . . on poor people and religious objectors;” and “imposes an unreasonable and irrelevant burden on voters who are poor and old.”

In a separate dissent, Justice Breyer wrote that the “statute is unconstitutional because it imposes a disproportionate burden upon those eligible voters who lack a driver’s license or other statutorily valid form of photo ID,” and that those adversely affected are “most likely to be poor, elderly, or disabled.” He concluded that “while the Constitution does not in general forbid

A majority of the justices on the three-member court of appeals said that the right of individual voters was not burdened by the photo ID law because “a vote in a political election rarely has any instrumental value.”

Indiana from enacting a photo ID requirement, this statute imposes a disproportionate burden upon those without valid photo IDs.”

It is difficult to predict the impact the *Crawford v. Marion County* decision will have on states which presently do not have photo ID requirements for in-person voting. However, given the demonstrable effect the requirement would have on Democratic voters, it is highly unlikely that states controlled by Democrats, or in which Democrats have a legislative or gubernatorial veto, would enact such legislation.

The right to vote is protected by more constitutional amendments—the First, Fourteenth, Fifteenth, Nineteenth, Twenty-

fourth, and Twenty-sixth—than any right we enjoy as Americans, not to mention numerous federal and state statutes which guarantee and protect voting rights, as well as declarations by the Supreme Court that the right to vote is fundamental because it is protective of all rights. Despite these statements of constitutional, statutory, and judicial principles, one of the enduring, and intolerable, ironies of our democracy is the willingness of those with power to limit the right to vote for racial and partisan reasons. ●

Laughlin McDonald is the Director of the Southern Regional ACLU.

PERSPECTIVES

Expanding Minnesota's Conversation



A treatment plan for Minnesota's health care system

We need to alleviate the immediate symptoms while taking measures to prevent further illness

By Bruce D. Snyder, MD FAAN

Commentaries on the “health care crisis” are satisfyingly guilt- and blame-ridden but not very productive. They usually run something like this: Consumers are obese fast-food loving smokers with thumb arthritis from the remote control. Physicians are self-seeking, bill-padding, litigation-ducking ignoramuses burning through the national treasure by nailing hips into septuagenarians. Tightwad insurers deny payment for life preserving care while blowing premium dollars on back-dated (and now underwater) options. And finally there are the self-serving, on-the-take policy-makers we call leaders.

We have found the enemy and they are us.

I've practiced and taught neurology for more than 35 years and seen patients suffer personal and financial crisis due to sickness and health care costs. I have struggled with departmental budgets, taught debt-laden medical students, and worked with leaders in health care systems. I understand that serious, constructive change is necessary to help us all get needed health care while being careful stewards of our money.

As a physician, I'm geared to problem solving in the form of a treatment plan, one that should ideally help the immediate symptoms while setting in motion measures to prevent further illness. For our health care system, a treatment plan can be organized into near-term relief and longer term systemic measures. But beyond that we Minnesotans have to take a careful look at ourselves and focus on the social issues that drive health care demand.

Near-term relief

Mandate universal basic medical, dental and mental health coverage based on current federal, state, and private sector programs. This parallels auto insurance requirements and is the basis for any meaningful reform. Universal coverage can slow premium growth by spreading risk over a larger group; rationalize pricing by reducing charging disparities between the insured and the uninsured; and reduce cost-shifting from the uninsured to the insured.

Establish a catastrophic (major medical) backup health insurance for all as a way to reduce medically related bankruptcies. Nationally more than 750,000 families go bankrupt annually as a result of illness and medical bills. This coverage is relatively inexpensive.

As a physician, I'm geared to problem solving in the form of a treatment plan.

Establish guidelines for acceptable administrative cost levels for health insurers (private and governmental).

Require electronic charting for health service providers and systems.

Reduce overhead by establishing uniform billing and diagnosis/procedure coding for all payers with standard software for submission of charges to any carrier; specify time requirements for processing and payment.

Ban “free” drug samples from doctors to reduce the prescribing of new expensive meds instead of equally effective older generics.

Stop advertising prescription drugs to consumers.

Longer-term systemic measures

Separate health insurance coverage from employment. This will relieve employers of an unsustainable burden, remove a barrier to small business, free up employees to seek better jobs, and prevent families and children from losing coverage because of divorce or unemployment.

Provide incentives for training more nurse practitioners, physician assistants, and RN's to supplement scarce primary care physicians.

Amend Medicare part D to permit government agencies to negotiate reduced drug prices.

Establish medical malpractice tort reform. Create an “adverse outcomes” compensation fund for patients injured during medical care.

Raise awareness about the costs of futile end of life over-treatment. Raise awareness of hospice and palliative care to preserve dignity and promote end of life comfort while preserving resources.

Why do we need so much medical care?

America spends 5 percent more of its gross domestic product on health care than other nation. Is that because of fraud and waste or are there legitimate reasons our people use more health care? I believe it's the latter. Discussions of health care don't seem to consider some major social forces that drive need and costs up.

Consider trauma. Our car-based transportation system is the most injury prone in the first world. Trauma is now America's most costly health issue (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation); annual trauma care costs more than heart disease.

War is a major driver of health costs, impacting not just the Veterans Administration budget but state budgets as well. When a soldier comes home angry, depressed and perhaps suicidal his/her entire family is affected. Secondary illness, especially depression, is common in family members who turn to community systems for care.

We suffer an epidemic of psychological trauma. The economic costs of untreated alcohol and drug abuse alone were estimated at \$160.7 billion in 2000. For survivors of child abuse, long-term psychiatric and medical health care costs total more than \$100 billion annually. More than 30 percent of primary care patients report an abuse history.

How can Minnesotans address these public health issues? What policies can we develop to reduce our need for care? Healthy people and families need less doctoring. And after all that's the main goal. ●

Bruce Snyder is a neurologist practicing in the Twin Cities and a Citizens League member.

11/20

Citizens League Annual Meeting

Today we're facing huge policy challenges, but these challenges actually provide a unique opportunity for creativity in policy making. The Citizens League's combination of imagination and pragmatism has been behind some of Minnesota's greatest innovations in the past and we need more of it today.

Join us for the Annual Meeting as we celebrate the past year, look ahead to next year, and discuss new ways to get involved in Citizens League efforts.

Reception 5 p.m. | Program 6:30 p.m. | Dessert 7:30 p.m.

The Depot Great Hall, 225 Third Street South, Minneapolis

Admission is free and refreshments will be served

For more information and to register, go to www.citizensleague.org

PERIODICALS



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