Politically complex task of redistricting lies ahead

by Dave Chadwick

Every 10 years, Minnesota’s lawmakers are asked to redraw the state’s legislative and congressional districts to reflect changes in the state’s population. While apparently a straightforward task, redistricting the state inevitably involves a perplexing number of twists and turns throughout the legislative and legal systems. How does a process that appears to be the most basic of mathematical procedures reach this level of political complexity? What can we expect from the next round of redistricting?

**Redistricting: the basic mechanics**

The redrawing of Minnesota’s legislative map formally begins next March, when data from the 2000 Census are delivered to the Legislature. A central staff will assemble and monitor the Census data, set up computer systems for each of the Legislature’s caucuses, and train the staffers who will actually draw up each caucus’s plan. A subcommittee of the Legislative Coordinating Commission is already working on a resolution to establish some basic principles to govern next year’s redistricting process and guide each caucus’s work.

After the Legislature completes its work, the plan will move to the governor. Traditionally, governors have deferred to the Legislature during the initial development of the state’s legislative and congressional maps. They play a central role, however, through their decision to sign or veto whatever final redistricting plans the Legislature devises.

At the same time redistricting advances through the legislative process, the state’s legislative maps will likely also be making their way through the courts. Once the 2000 Census data is available, individual citizens will be free to bring lawsuits based on the dilution of their vote in districts that have grown beyond their 1990 size. Of course, these “average voter” suits are typically brought by partisan activists based on an assessment of their chances of getting a favorable redistricting plan drawn by the courts. Redistricting can also end up in the courts if the Legislature and Governor fail to agree on a plan in time for the next election.

**A high-stakes political process**

Superficially, redistricting is a simple mathematical process of redrawing districts to include equal numbers of voters. In fact, it represents one of the most politically intense tasks lawmakers are asked to undertake.

Redistricting forces lawmakers to address fundamental questions about their own personal survival in the Legislature. David Jennings was Speaker of the House during the redistricting debate that followed the 1980 Census. “Because the drawing of these lines is so inextricably connected to the very basic self-interest of the people in the Legislature, weird things happen,” he said. Jennings predicts that any plan that does emerge from the Legislature will benefit incumbents as a group, rather than either political party. Attracting a majority of votes, Jennings believes, “means coming up with a plan that is going to protect incumbents or create a reasonable opportunity for a significant number of incumbents to return.” Inevitably, however, at least a few incumbents are forced into new districts or into districts already occupied by one of their colleagues.

The basic struggle to define a plan acceptable to the majority may be complicated next year by technological advances. Most commercially available personal computers now have the computing power needed to handle legislative map-making. The software needed to crunch the data, while expensive, will be considerably easier...
Redistricting
continued from page 1

to obtain than it was in 1990 or 1980. "In 1980, very few people had the ability to sit
down and look at possible alternative
carts," notes Jennings. "By the 1990 redis-
tecting, many people... that's a different
tory, everybody will have that capability."

An emerging suburban majority?

For the past few decades, population
has been growing steadily in the Twin Cities
area, along corridors to Saint Cloud and Rochester and, in
recent years, in the central lakes region where growth has
dropped in the western and northeastern rural areas of the state and in the core
cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul.

Political strategists and election watch-
ors have long predicted that continued
growth of the suburbs will fundamentally reshade
district boundaries. In fact, suburban areas have
drawn increased representation at the
Legislature in the last few redistricting
cycles. Will the 2000 Census formally
push us over the edge into a new era of
voting districts? "I hate it when fairness and self-preservation
are at odds!"

Jennings predicts that the increasing
independence of voters will raise the like-
thood of the Legislature changing parti-
san hands in each election cycle and
might also boost the potential for a
clear suburban bloc of legislators.

On the other hand, Freeman stresses
the important role political parties play in
local elections. Even in suburban districts, the
effects of gerrymandering are critical to the success of
individual campaigns.

The Governor

Governor Jesse Ventura represents a
dynamic in the upcoming redistricting
debate. Officially, the Governor
intends to focus on finding a fair plan for the
cities and suburbs in Minnesota, without regard to partisan
political concerns. He also
does not intend to link redistricting to any
other political initiatives or reform prop-
sals, as in the past when advancing partisan
interests of his own party.

Given the past few years of bipartisan
governance, Ventura's presence might
create an atmosphere of compromise
from redistricting debates. At the same
time, the meaning of "fairness"
when redistricting a state
as diverse as Minnesota might be
inherently different from the needs of
inner-ring and newer suburbs.

Former suburban legislator Mike
Freeman often offers a somewhat different per-
pective. "The suburbs are not uniform," he
notes. "The needs of Richfield, Robbinsdale and Golden Valley are
very different from that of
Duluth and Maple Grove. There's no
'average' suburb."

Another popular view sees more
common ground between older, inner-ring
suburbs and core cities than between
inner-ring and newer suburbs.

Whether these dynamics create any specific
blocks of suburban legislators, however,
will depend on how the lines are drawn and
how suburban regions are grouped
together. "At the end of the day," Jennings
observes, "the map will matter." He believes that the potential for this
city/special district to a new geography will
impact the amount of this redistric-
ting on Minnesota's political landscape.

Changing partisan identity

A recent poll by Metropolitan State
University indicated that 42 percent of Twin Cities residents identified themselves as
"independents" rather than Democrats or Republicans (Minnesota Journal, Sept. 19).

How will this dramatic shift in partisan identity play out in redistricting?"Jennings predicts that the increasing
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might also boost the potential for a
clear suburban bloc of legislators.

Once the Governor and his Finance Department
are finished with the redistricting, the state's legislative map
will be finished. Officially, the Governor
the Legislature to set tax and
spending levels. The Governor's plan will probably
be for a "gerrymandered" state, which would
be a poor reflection on the Governor's ability to
be a leader. However, the Governor is not
a simple "tax and spend" politician, and
may try to do something different. Perhaps
he will push for a more balanced approach,
which would be a welcome change from the past.

The Governor's proposals will
depend on how the lines are drawn
and the political needs of the state. The Governor
is a strong advocate of "fairness" in the redistricting process,
and has called for a "bipartisan" approach to redistricting.

The Governor has also called for
a "redistricting commission," which would
be made up of representatives from the
State Senate, State House, and a
election reform commission. The commission
would be responsible for drawing the new legislative
districts, and would be required to
consider the needs of all Minnesota residents,
not just the political needs of the Governor or
the legislative leadership.

The Governor's plan will also
take into account the recommendations of
the Legislature's redistricting commission,
which has been working on the issue
for several years. The commission has
recommended a number of changes to the
state's legislative map, including
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Minnesota Journal October 17, 2000

Solem sees transportation as key infrastructure issue for growth

by Dana Schroeder

Solem continued from page 4

Jim Solem, recently retired as the Metropolitan Council's regional administrator, has no doubt about the Council—at the behest of the Legislature—taking over the operations of the region's waste-water treatment and transit systems, which occurred just as he took office in July 1994. It was "absolutely the right thing to do to bring together all the pieces—the two big infrastructure systems that are central to our growth," he said in a recent interview. "It had to be done."

Solem said the region has provided one of the key infrastructure systems since 1969, when the Waste Control Commission was created. "It's quite a remarkable system in terms of meeting the growth needs of this region. We have the capacity—with a few additions and some substantial upgrades—for the next 20 years."

"The big infrastructure issue is transportation," he said. "Under the old fragmented system there was an enormous amount of energy wasted in conflict among the three transportation/transit planning organizations in this region: the Metropolitan Council, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority and the Regional Transit Board. The merger provided a coordinated approach for building on what happened in the past 20 years."

"Unlike our sewer system, in 20 years our transportation system could sink up the entire metro area!"

In the case of transit, he said, the Council supported the light-rail transit administration. "Ridgenup is up, he said, the light-rail effort is underway, and the capital system is being upgraded, with construction of a new garage site and the purchase of new buses. "A lot of good things are happening," he said.

Wastewater rates are down 13 to 15 percent, Solem said, while the operating budget was reduced by $20 million. At the same time they've taken on over $200 million in system upgrades and improvements.

"How were we able to do that?'' he asked. "By actually getting control of the operation of the place and doing the kind of efficiency improvements that should have been done 15 years ago. That happened because the governing body supported me and the people at Wastewater Services played a big role in the change process."

"So I think the operational results of the merger were exactly what needed to be done, he said. "Solem said, "Operations did not cut out planning and place and I had some faith in the people to get it right, he said. "Operations had to listen to planning."

"At the same time we have moved ahead in implementing the Council's Regional Blueprint in ways I think have been very productive," he said. "We've engaged the local governments and the development community in serious conversations about the future of the region."

Solem said Metro Council Chair Ted Mondale and the new Council have "enormous and right agenda and the right approach for building on what happened over the last six years." He said in the next 20 years the region will add a half million more people, or about 20 percent, to the current population of 2.6 million. "We're the ninth fastest growing region in the United States," he said, "so we can't avoid the issues and the impact of continued growth."

He said Mondale and the new Council have made a priority of linking growth and transportation, he said, "Maybe the new Legislature will restructure and provide continued funding for the most important piece of this region, even beyond the seven counties."

30 years of service
Solem reflected on his last 30 years of public service in Minnesota.

"I've had three great jobs since 1970," he said. "I worked at the State Planning Agency when it was doing really good work, I had a great lifetime opportunity to be involved in the 1993 campaign finance reforms: What worked? What didn't?"

What's needed?
by Beth Fraser

Solem continued on page 5

He Governor, who is a strong supporter of the Met Council, Solem said. "He has demonstrated more concern for serious regional issues of the kind of transportation—than we've had in many a decade."

"The Legislature has to get engaged and stay engaged in growth issues and capacity-through long-term growth," he said. "Maybe the new Legislature will restructure and provide continued funding for that long term, probably as good as it gets."

"But the Met Council was a fascinating and marvelous opportunity to be involved at an important time, with the merger and the things taking place. That's a once in a lifetime opportunity. I had a great time doing it—working with a great bunch of people, both Council members and the staff. It was the most fascinating thing I could do in public administration. I can't think of a place where you could be doing a more diverse set of things on any given day. I think a lot of good work was done..."

"I would change anything, he said of his jobs.

Solem will continue doing special projects at the Council until the end of the year. He is on the board of several non-profits, "although I'm not going to run anything again. He also plans to do some housing-related work, but has not yet defined it.

Dana Schroeder is editor of the Minnesota Journal and can be reached at 612-338-0791 or info@citizenleague.net.

Campaign finance continued on page 6


In 1993 the Minnesota Legislature passed major campaign finance reforms, based on the recommendations of the Citizens League in its 1992 report, Reform the Election Process, Restore the Public's Trust, which called for a new system to restructure the campaign finance system and make Minnesota a national leader in the fight against the corruption of government. "If we want to succeed for the long haul, if we don't want to become another Atlanta," he said. "In Atlanta congestion has had a dramatic impact on the willingness of the money trail in our political system. But the public generally has no way to track what influence various donors have on these decisions. The 1993 reforms also set up "conduit contributions" and required absolutely no meaningful reporting of those contributions."

Conduit funds are accounts set up by

Soft money
The influence of this "soft money" on our political process is harder to detect. Party and legislative leaders make decisions—which candidate's campaign to support, what caucus positions to take, who don't leave the campaign finance system; it was simply renewed. Between 1992 (the last time the full Legislature was up for reelection before the reforms) and 1996 (the only time since the 1993 reforms that the whole Legislature was up for reelection), contributions to state parties and legislative caucuses increased 63 percent—spending from $3,412,832 to $5,498,438. The amount of money parties and caucuses gave to candidates increased by 78 percent—from $356,065 in 1993 to $640,400 in 1996. This year's elections will undoubtedly set even higher levels.

Soft money
The influence of this "soft money" on our political process is harder to detect. Party and legislative leaders make decisions—which candidate's campaign to support, what caucus positions to take, who donor. But the public generally has no way to track what influence various donors have on these decisions. The 1993 reforms also set up "conduit contributions" and required absolutely no meaningful reporting of those contributions. Conduit funds are accounts set up by

Campaign finance continued on page 6

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corporations to encourage employees to financially participate in the political process. The corporation can't tell employees who to vote for, but they can do "education" on issues of importance to the company. Employees contribute by writing a check to the fund or through payroll deduction. Then a check is sent to the "Employees of X Corporation Fiduciary Fund" is sent to the candidate along with a list of employees who contributed.

Unlike political action committees, which similarly aggregate individuals' contributions from employees through a conduit fund, the contributions appear only as "Small Un-itemized giving over $100 to a candidate through a payroll deduction. Then a which similarly aggregate individuals' contributions, which requires disclosure of conduit funds, leaves candidates who agree to abide by matching money for candidates to rebut the candidate and the staff know that ability contribution.

A national poll of likely voters last spring by the Mellin Financial system provides candidates with the option of full public financing for their campaigns. Candidates must qualify for public money by collecting a specified number of signatures and $5 contributions in their district. Candidates must also agree to forego fundraising and abide by spending limits. The CleanMoney/Clean Elections proposal for Minnesota includes caps on contributions to parties and caucuses and provides matching money to help candidates targeted by independent expenditures. Unlike the Eight Circuit Court sided this provision unconstitutional. This leaves candidates who agree to abide by spending limits no funds for a rebuttal if they have already committed available funds in other ways. It makes it possible for a wealthy special interest group to sway the election.

Clearly, large donors believe political contributions are a worthwhile investment. Both PACs and large donors often give contributions to multiple candidates and parties, not just those that can win their political philosophy. That way no matter who wins, they develop a relationship and access. The Andover, for example, who ran the Ancises Daniels Madland Company, gave over $10,000 to three different gubernatorial candidates. The Pohlad family (owner of the Twins owner Carl Pohlad) gave $25,000 to both the state Republican and DFL parties on the same day during the 1998 election cycle.

Clean Money/Clean Elections

As long as candidates rely on private contributions to run their campaigns, large contributions will have undue influence. Instead of continuing to tinker with our broken campaign finance system, we need to replace it. And now there is a model, already in use in other states, that is comprehensive, fair and constitutional. The CleanMoney/Clean Elections system provides candidates with the option of full public financing for their campaigns. Candidates must qualify for public money by collecting a specified number of signatures and $5 contributions in their district. Candidates must also agree to forego fundraising and abide by spending limits. The CleanMoney/Clean Elections proposal for Minnesota includes caps on contributions to parties and caucuses and provides matching money to help candidates targeted by independent expenditures.

Thus, unless an individual employee gives over $100 to a candidate through a conduit fund, the contributions appear only as "Small Un-itemized giving over $100 to a candidate through a payroll deduction. Then a which similarly aggregate individuals' contributions, which requires disclosure of conduit funds, leaves candidates who agree to abide by matching money for candidates to rebut the candidate and the staff know that ability contribution.

"This new campaign reform gives new meaning to the phrase, "Climm free!"

Bob Fraser (bfresser@mpls-stps.org) is the public policy organizer for the Minnesota Alliance for New Campaign Action (MAPA).

Red Wing Republican Eagle said (Sept. 21) that the proposal "recognizes credit for initiating an examination of how public schools are funded, but the paper is "less enamored" with the suggestion that the state control of local school funding. Ventura's proposal for the state to fund all of K-12 education is "an intriguing and challenging idea. It said Ventura will have to fill in specifics about where the revenue to replace the local property taxes will come from, how the plan will address the inequities caused by excess levies and referenda in some districts and what difference the funding system would make in local control of schools. Fergus Falls Daily Journal said (Sept. 15) Ventura's plan is "interesting" but "ultimately would not work for Minnesota. The paper said, "The 100 percent state funding will actually lower the $100 percent state control of education" and that reducing local funding "removes one of the large incentives for local interest and concern about the details of school operation." Bemidji Pioneer said (Sept. 13) Ventura's plan to amend the state constitution with "merit study amendment. The paper said "a system must be devised to assure some local controls over curriculum and programs. It said the plan could benefit taxpayers with the prospect of statewide negotiation of teachers contracts, school district consolidations and tighter accountability controls. Star Tribune said (Sept. 19) Ventura's plan needs to be clarified, since it would not remove the exceptions that levies and referenda in some districts and what difference the funding system would make in local control of schools. "In the modern world the intelligence of public opinion is the one indispensable condition of social progress."—C. Elton

Balanced Views From Around the State


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I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information may be subjected to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil penalties. Lyle D. Wray, publisher. Sept. 20, 2000

Red Wing Republican Eagle said (Sept. 21) that the proposal "recognizes credit for initiating an examination of how public schools are funded, but the paper is "less enamored" with the suggestion that the state control of local school funding. Ventura's proposal for the state to fund all of K-12 education is "an intriguing and challenging idea. It said Ventura will have to fill in specifics about where the revenue to replace the local property taxes will come from, how the plan will address the inequities caused by excess levies and referenda in some districts and what difference the funding system would make in local control of schools. Fergus Falls Daily Journal said (Sept. 15) Ventura's plan is "interesting" but "ultimately would not work for Minnesota. The paper said, "The 100 percent state funding will actually lower the $100 percent state control of education" and that reducing local funding "removes one of the large incentives for local interest and concern about the details of school operation." Bemidji Pioneer said (Sept. 13) Ventura's plan to amend the state constitution with "merit study amendment. The paper said "a system must be devised to assure some local controls over curriculum and programs. It said the plan could benefit taxpayers with the prospect of statewide negotiation of teachers contracts, school district consolidations and tighter accountability controls. Star Tribune said (Sept. 19) Ventura's plan needs to be clarified, since it would not remove the exceptions that levies and referenda in some districts and what difference the funding system would make in local control of schools.

"In the modern world the intelligence of public opinion is the one indispensable condition of social progress."—C. Elton

Balanced Views From Around the State

"This new campaign reform gives new meaning to the phrase, "Climm free!"

Bob Fraser (bfresser@mpls-stps.org) is the public policy organizer for the Minnesota Alliance for New Campaign Action (MAPA).
Fiscal disparities finds no home on the Range.

The Iron Range fiscal disparities program—modeled after the tax-base sharing program in the Twin Cities metro area—has been declared unconstitutional by an Itasca County District Court judge. In the Sept. 13 decision, the judge ordered the implementation of the program—passed by the Legislature in 1996 and first put in operation in 1997—to cease immediately. However, the order also included a 90-day stay, pending post-trial motions or an appeal. The state attorney general's office intends to file an appeal.

The program shares 40 percent of the growth in commercial-industrial property tax base since 1995 in the area that makes up the taconite tax relief area: all of Cook and Lake counties, parts of St. Louis, Itasca, Aitkin and Crow Wing Counties and a small part of Koochiching County. In tax year 2000 the Range program has a shared tax-base pool of $852,777, or 2.5 percent of the area's C-I tax base of $33.8 million, which is redistributed to 239 participating communities.

The judge's opinion relied heavily on the 1974 state Supreme Court decision that upheld the constitutionality of the Twin Cities fiscal disparities program. The Iron Range decision does not contest the constitutionality of the Twin Cities program. But it makes a clear distinction between the density and interdependence of the Twin Cities metro area and the less dense, independent communities in the geographically larger Iron Range area. It also cites the fact that there are no regional governing agencies on the Iron Range comparable to the Metropolitan Council.—Dana Schroeder.

Minnesota has 847,305 public school K-12 students and 6,500 students—or less than one percent—in charter schools, according to Education Minnesota, the state's teachers' union. Private schools have 87,674, or about 10.3 percent of the number of public school students. There are 54,007 teachers, or one for every 15.7 students in the state.—Lyle Wiry.

Researchers studying American teenagers for the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation over the past 10 years were startled to discover how rapidly young people's ambitions were rising. Fully 90 percent of adolescents now expect to graduate from college and 70 percent expect to have professional careers. Six times more teenagers want to be doctors and five times more lawyers as the projected openings in those fields. More than half are aiming for degrees that exceed the level of education needed for the careers they want.

Most, however, have no clear plans for reaching those goals: "drifting dreamers," the researchers call them.

Barbara Schneider and David Stevenson report the study in The Ambitious Generation: America's Teenagers; Motivated But Directionless.

---Ted Kolden.

Almost 900 organizations currently participate in Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (MHFA) mortgage and home improvement loan programs. An agency analysis, however, indicates that only 15 of these organizations produce 80 percent of the loans. The MHFA board recently approved changes that will ensure widespread access to these loans, while increasing efficient and effective use of agency resources.—Marina Lyon.

Tech bucks go further here. While technology professionals living in the Bay Area and New York City lead the nation in salaries, technologists in Texas, Atlanta and the Twin Cities have as much as twice the discretionary income, according to an "affordability index" developed by techies.com, Inc., research.

The index factors tech salaries against the federal Cost of Living Index to measure their value in real dollars in 26 technology markets. The five most affordable markets, along with their index values, are (1) Austin, 105.6; (2) Dallas, 105.5; (3) Houston, 105.3; (4) Twin Cities, 100.1; and (5) Atlanta, 99.7. The five least affordable markets are (1) New York City, 49.5; (2) Bay Area, 72; (3) San Diego, 77; (4) Boston, 79; and (5) Los Angeles, 82.

The techies.com index shows that housing and other cost of living factors have outstripped the earnings bonus in coastal tech markets, leaving many land-locked tech markets ideal for professionals seeking good pay.—Ron Wirtz.

In a ranking of the best national universities by US News and World Report (Sept. 11), the University of Minnesota again did not make the top 50. Five Big Ten schools did, including the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Schools were ranked on 16 indicators of academic quality.

Of the 505 regional universities ranked by the magazine nationwide—those with relatively few doctoral programs—31 were in the Midwest. All three from Minnesota making the list were private—the University of St. Thomas, the College of St. Catherine and the College of St. Scholastica. No MnSCU institutions made the list, while three University of Wisconsin campuses—Eau Claire, La Crosse and Stevens Point—did.—L.W.

Pedestrians wondering whether cars really will obey the "yield" law might recall the old wisdom of sailors:

"Here lies the body of Roger Gray, Who died defending his right-of-way. He was right, dead right, as he sailed along. But he's just as dead as if he'd been wrong."—T.K.

Contributors to "Take Note" include Minnesota Journal and Citizens League staff members and Marina Munoz Lyon, vice president of the Pohlad Family Foundation, and Ron Wirtz, district news editor for the Federal Reserve Bank's fedgazette.
Welcome

New and returning members

John Brolly
Robb Clarksen
John Colonna
John Darland
Thomas Grandy
Elly Gustafson-Held
Steve Hoffman
Kate Kelsch
Robert and Deborah Montgomery
Alan Shilepsky
Leo Stern
Elizabeth Willoughby

Citizens League NETWORK presents

Lyle Wray
Executive Director
Citizens League

*** Please note the date change ***

Monday, October 23, 2000
7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Macalester College
Weyerhauser Board Room
1600 Grand Avenue
St. Paul, MN

There is no charge for this event. A reception with light refreshments starting at 6:30 will precede the meeting.

Lyle Wray's presentation is part of George Latimer's Urban Studies class at Macalester College. The meeting was originally scheduled for October 30. Milwaukee Mayor John Norquist was scheduled for the 23rd but an unforeseen conflict has necessitated a switch in dates. Wray will present on October 23 and Norquist on October 30.

Citizens League Network meetings are designed to provide League members and their guests with an opportunity to discuss current policy issues and to interact and meet with others interested in learning more about regional issues and initiatives.

Milwaukee Mayor John Norquist headlines next Mind-Opener

The next League Mind-Opener breakfast series will begin on Tuesday, October 31. Milwaukee Mayor John Norquist will talk about urban design, schools, housing and the future of American cities. Norquist will also be the guest lecturer at George Latimer's class at Macalester the night before.

The second meeting in the series will be on Thursday, November 2. The 1999 Legislature directed the Environmental Quality Board (EQB) to examine the long-term effects of urban development on the economy, environment and way of life in Minnesota. A citizen steering committee has developed a list of issues for the study to address. Mark Haveman of the EQB will outline the committee's draft report and solicit public input. The series will conclude on Thursday, November 9 with an as yet to be determined program. Watch your mail for more details.
About 80 people participated in a conversation about the future of the community and the League at the annual meeting on September 21. (A complete summary of the meeting can be found on the League’s web site at www.citizensleague.net.)

League Executive Director Lyle Wray set the context for the evening with a wide-ranging presentation entitled “Fasten Your Seat Belts Minnesota!” Among the trends he cited:

- Only 5 percent of metro residents consider themselves to be involved in civic affairs today compared to 17 percent in a previous survey.
- In 1996, 20 percent of metro residents considered themselves political independents. Today that number has risen to 42 percent.
- Demographic, economic and technological changes have radically altered the notion of “place.”

Independent-minded voters, less civic involvement, a new political landscape and changing local leadership present a radically new environment for the Citizens League. Wray described the League’s niche as providing good ideas to make this a better place. He challenged members to think of new ways to do that; and to find ways to fund the League that are less dependent on traditional place-based leadership and institutions.

Laurel Feddema followed with a review of the work of a special Board sub-committee that examined the League’s mix of “products.”

The committee recommended that the League review its mission and adopt a more rigorous approach to advancing the mission, strengthen the program array and get better value from its products. Specifically they said the League should:

- Think and plan more strategically.
- Utilize themes to define topics.
- Care more about the process.
- Strive for breakthrough thinking.
- Use technology as an enhancement.
- Collaborate more.
- Advocate and promote.

Kent Eklund described the work of his committee that looked at the past, current and future mix of League revenue sources. They concluded that the ferment in corporate contributions was likely to continue and that the current level of this source would continue to decline. They also were skeptical that individual support would grow fast enough to fill the gap. They recommended a three-part diversification strategy that depends largely from continued support of the community. Specifically, they suggested:

- A two-part foundation strategy focused on local place-based foundations and on national foundations that are interested in larger implications of our regional work.
- Renew emphasis on building the League’s endowment fund.
- Continue to pursue contract opportunities for League research work.

Tell us what you think!

A complete summary of the annual meeting and responses to the questions can be found on the League’s web site. Take a look and then tell us what you think.

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