Dividing up the political pie
Interest groups jockey for role in state's redistricting process

by J. Trout Lowen

Every 10 years, after results of national census are released, states get busy re-drawing the political landscapes. The process of redistricting—drawing new boundaries for congressional and state legislative districts—often becomes a highly contentious turf war between Democrats and Republicans. It's an opportunity for parties to see if they can stack the deck with enough voters per district to ensure their candidates get elected and their incumbents remain in office. Given Minnesota's highly independent Governor, redistricting has now become a three-for-all.

But politicians aren't the only interested parties weighing in on the redistricting debate. The federal Voting Rights Act requires any state redistricting plan ensure that the Constitutional rights of Black, Hispanic, Asian and Native American voters are not infringed upon, at a minimum, and where possible improve opportunities for minority representation. Currently, the four minority groups make up about 12 percent of the state's population, but only about two percent of the State Legislature.

This year, officials from cities, suburbs, and urban areas are also expected to elbow into the debate, along side representatives from some of the state's major industries, such as agriculture, mining, and tourism. Both the Governor's plan and the Senate plan reflect some of the urban-suburban debate, and the population shift from city to suburb. Both plans increase the number of metro-area suburban representatives in Congress from 2 to 3.

The intent of redistricting is to equalize the population in each district to within 2 percent, to protect the interests of minority communities, and produce districts that are compact, contiguous and take into consideration the needs of “communities of interest.” This year, the idea of political competitiveness has also been added to the list of considerations. Census data shows the state voters are split nearly 50-50 between Democrats and Republicans. Redrawing the boundaries for the state's two Senate, eight congressional, and 201 state legislative districts is supposed to be the responsibility of state lawmakers. But often political differences make consensus impossible. Then the job of redistricting falls to the courts.

Both the House and the Senate earlier this year released separate redistricting proposals. The Republican-controlled House plan would, for the first time in 100 years, create a single congressional district that includes Minneapolis and St. Paul. The Twin Cities suburbs would be represented by three members instead of two, and northern Minnesota would become a single district instead of two. The Senate plan, drawn up by Democrats, preserves separate districts for Minneapolis and St. Paul, and maintains the status quo by allocating four congressional seats to greater Minnesota and two to the suburbs.

In August, Gov. Jesse Ventura issued his plan for re-drawing congressional boundaries. A proposal for legislative districts is expected out soon. The Governor's congressional redistricting plan changes the balance of representation from what his essentially a 4-4 urban rural split in favor of greater metro-area representation. Under his proposal, the metro area would have five congressional representatives, one each for

www.citizensleague.net
The Immigrant Experience in Minnesota:

Journal Keillor continues:

depth imagery from popular culture, are strong, all the men are good looking, trademark characteristics. Fictional Lake Wobegon, "the place where everyone is

true, all the children are strong, all the men are good looking, all the children are above average," is, foremost, a product of its immigrant roots. Keillor continues:

"What's special about this town? It's perfectly much like a lot of towns, isn't it? There is a perfectly good answer to that question; it only takes a moment to think of it, in one thing, the Statue of the Unknown Norwegian. If other towns have one, we don't know about it."

Keillor refers to a subtitle for Lake Wobegon: "the town that time forgot." No wonder that a March 3, 1998 Washington Post article on Minnesota's unique social and political climate included the following paragraphs:

"With generous social welfare programs and a civil rights ethos, Minnesotans and its homogeneous populace and liberal politicians once seemed — either naively or nobly — out of step with the rest of the country. But for better or worse, Minnesota seems to be catching up with the rest of America. An influx of mostly poor blacks, Hmong, Laotians, and African refugees is reshaping the politics of this comfortable enclave that was a model for FDR's "New Deal."

What does this really mean? Has Minnesota been merely a quaint, second-tier culturally annexed province that is only now experiencing the transfor-
mative effects of migration?

So, what's special about this state? It's pretty much like a lot of states isn't it? Well, it is a lot more like other states than most folks realize, but concluding that it is a micro-

American immigrant experience isn't far enough. Minnesotans' dominant ethnocultural makeup was shaped more in the mid-late 19th century than at any other time in its history.

When Minnesota was granted U.S. territo-

rial status in 1849, it was the dawning of a
decade-long population influx unparalleled anywhere in the nation. Railroad expansion, combined with the seizing of Indian lands, fueled a steady stream of new settlers from the eastern states and Canada, joined in massively increasing numbers by German, Scandinavian, British, and Irish immigrants. As the Civil War ended, corn came from some of these areas, along with Poles, Danes, and Czechs to continue cultivating large tracts of

inexpensive land made available by the railroad plan to the government.

Not all of these immigrants set out to farm. The Twin Cities early on emerged as the
center of commerce and manufactur-

ing for the area, and by the first decade of the new century, counted over a half mil-

lion residents, nearly 30 percent of whom were foreign born. Few cities in the coun-

try had a larger proportion of immigrants at that time. In Minneapolis, the domi-

nent groups were Swedes and Norwegians Germans and Irish in St. Paul.

The Iron Range areas to the north, attracted a significant number of South

Slavs, Finns, Indians, Polos. The cities picked up share of newcomers from these

lands also, as World War I curtailed the

epic immigration flow, Minnesotans of

Nordic "stock" still vastly outnumbered the rest. The "Statue of the Unknown

Norwegian" stood taller than those of

Columbus, Kawasaki, Paul Bunyan, and Luke the Bluebird.

There can be no denying that Minnesota

remains a bastion of transplanted northern European cultures. One only has to look at the

occupations of the 1890 and 1900 census years. What difference has this really

continued on page 7

Retoooling the public service for new times

by Lyle Wray

It might seem like a funny time to be talking about retooling public service in Minnesota. Up to 28,000 members of two unions are striking the first strike of state employees in over 30 years. Minnesota's 1.3 million baby boomers edging toward retirement—the first

boom numbers will turn age 65 in 2010—there is an increasingly urgent need to address several fundamental issues in the public service sector.

First, with as many as half of our public servants retiring, we need to be concerned about replacing those departing. A look into the future shows the supply pipeline for some professions, from nurses to teach-

ers to civil engineers, is drying up. Occupations that were traditional career paths for women are hard hit now that there are many more choices available, and some of those occupations don't have enough new people to replace those departing. The first order of business is to develop state and local level spreadsheets identifying departing workers and recruit-

ing targets for key provinces foreign women. Few cities in the coun-

country had a larger proportion of immigrants at that time. In Minneapolis, the domi-
nant groups were Swedes and Norwegians Germans and Irish in St. Paul.

The Iron Range areas to the north, attracted a significant number of South

Slavs, Finns, Indians, Polos. The cities picked up share of newcomers from these

lands also, as World War I curtailed the

epic immigration flow, Minnesotans of

Nordic "stock" still vastly outnumbered the rest. The "Statue of the Unknown

Norwegian" stood taller than those of

Columbus, Kawasaki, Paul Bunyan, and Luke the Bluebird.

There can be no denying that Minnesota

remains a bastion of transplanted northern European cultures. One only has to look at the

occupations of the 1890 and 1900 census years. What difference has this really

continued on page 7

Retoooling the public service for new times

by Lyle Wray

It might seem like a funny time to be talking about retooling public service in Minnesota. Up to 28,000 members of two unions are striking the first strike of state employees in over 30 years. Minnesota's 1.3 million baby boomers edging toward retirement—the first

boom numbers will turn age 65 in 2010—there is an increasingly urgent need to address several fundamental issues in the public service sector.

First, with as many as half of our public servants retiring, we need to be concerned about replacing those departing. A look into the future shows the supply pipeline for some professions, from nurses to teach-

ers to civil engineers, is drying up. Occupations that were traditional career paths for women are hard hit now that there are many more choices available, and some of those occupations don't have enough new people to replace those departing. The first order of business is to develop state and local level spreadsheets identifying departing workers and recruit-

ing targets for key provinces foreign women. Few cities in the coun-

country had a larger proportion of immigrants at that time. In Minneapolis, the domi-
nant groups were Swedes and Norwegians Germans and Irish in St. Paul.

The Iron Range areas to the north, attracted a significant number of South

Slavs, Finns, Indians, Polos. The cities picked up share of newcomers from these

lands also, as World War I curtailed the

epic immigration flow, Minnesotans of

Nordic "stock" still vastly outnumbered the rest. The "Statue of the Unknown

Norwegian" stood taller than those of

Columbus, Kawasaki, Paul Bunyan, and Luke the Bluebird.

There can be no denying that Minnesota

remains a bastion of transplanted northern European cultures. One only has to look at the

occupations of the 1890 and 1900 census years. What difference has this really

continued on page 7

Retoooling the public service for new times

by Lyle Wray

It might seem like a funny time to be talking about retooling public service in Minnesota. Up to 28,000 members of two unions are striking the first strike of state employees in over 30 years. Minnesota's 1.3 million baby boomers edging toward retirement—the first

boom numbers will turn age 65 in 2010—there is an increasingly urgent need to address several fundamental issues in the public service sector.

First, with as many as half of our public servants retiring, we need to be concerned about replacing those departing. A look into the future shows the supply pipeline for some professions, from nurses to teach-

ers to civil engineers, is drying up. Occupations that were traditional career paths for women are hard hit now that there are many more choices available, and some of those occupations don't have enough new people to replace those departing. The first order of business is to develop state and local level spreadsheets identifying departing workers and recruit-

ing targets for key provinces foreign women. Few cities in the coun-

country had a larger proportion of immigrants at that time. In Minneapolis, the domi-
nant groups were Swedes and Norwegians Germans and Irish in St. Paul.

The Iron Range areas to the north, attracted a significant number of South

Slavs, Finns, Indians, Polos. The cities picked up share of newcomers from these

lands also, as World War I curtailed the

epic immigration flow, Minnesotans of

Nordic "stock" still vastly outnumbered the rest. The "Statue of the Unknown

Norwegian" stood taller than those of

Columbus, Kawasaki, Paul Bunyan, and Luke the Bluebird.

There can be no denying that Minnesota

remains a bastion of transplanted northern European cultures. One only has to look at the

occupations of the 1890 and 1900 census years. What difference has this really

continued on page 7

Retoooling the public service for new times

by Lyle Wray

It might seem like a funny time to be talking about retooling public service in Minnesota. Up to 28,000 members of two unions are striking the first strike of state employees in over 30 years. Minnesota's 1.3 million baby boomers edging toward retirement—the first

boom numbers will turn age 65 in 2010—there is an increasingly urgent need to address several fundamental issues in the public service sector.

First, with as many as half of our public servants retiring, we need to be concerned about replacing those departing. A look into the future shows the supply pipeline for some professions, from nurses to teach-

ers to civil engineers, is drying up. Occupations that were traditional career paths for women are hard hit now that there are many more choices available, and some of those occupations don't have enough new people to replace those departing. The first order of business is to develop state and local level spreadsheets identifying departing workers and recruit-

ing targets for key provinces foreign women. Few cities in the coun-

country had a larger proportion of immigrants at that time. In Minneapolis, the domi-
nant groups were Swedes and Norwegians Germans and Irish in St. Paul.

The Iron Range areas to the north, attracted a significant number of South

Slavs, Finns, Indians, Polos. The cities picked up share of newcomers from these

lands also, as World War I curtailed the

epic immigration flow, Minnesotans of

Nordic "stock" still vastly outnumbered the rest. The "Statue of the Unknown

Norwegian" stood taller than those of

Columbus, Kawasaki, Paul Bunyan, and Luke the Bluebird.

There can be no denying that Minnesota

remains a bastion of transplanted northern European cultures. One only has to look at the

occupations of the 1890 and 1900 census years. What difference has this really

continued on page 7
Minneapolis and St. Paul, and three suburban representatives. Greater Minnesota would be divided into a northern, a western, and a southern district.

"I'm not in the gambling business but let's see the face it, given our track record going back to 1913, the Legislature's record on enacting redistricting bills without court intervention is not very good."

The Governor's plan better represents the population distribution of the state, argues Joe Mansky, the governor's redistricting manager. "If you look at the census data, the data indicates that 56 percent of the state population lives in the 11 County metropolitan area, and on that basis their needs to be more representation for the metropolitan area," he adds.

Virtually no one involved in the redistricting process expects any of the three plans to garner the votes needed to pass them. We hope lawmakers will listen and do their communities to serve their own political ends. Cities, Higgins said, want to be seen as communities of interest so their populations remain intact. The state's plan is in place, cities and counties must re-draw their own ward and precinct boundaries, then get the approval of their voters. Most of the changes need to be completed in time for candidates to file for office in July 2002.

"It's really a big job, with no margin for error," Higgins says.

Timing may be a big concern for cities, but it is not the only concern. City officials are also interested in how lawmakers will slice and dice their communities to serve their own political ends. Cities, Higgins said, want to be seen as communities of interest so their populations remain together in a single congressional district, or are split among the lesser number of legislative districts.

That is something that we believe is important to try to help communities work with the various levels of government up the chain," Higgins adds, "whether it's the counties, or the school districts, or, more directly with the Legislature and Congress, so that you're not represented by two different congressmen in the same city.

That's a situation Rochester Mayor Chuck Canfield is all too familiar with. Rochester is represented by seven different representatives with districts that finger out across the southern portion of the state. Canfield said he thinks the city fell out across the southern portion of the state. Canfield said that the city's political and economic interests are often divided among the seven House members who have communities of interests," Canfield adds.

The entire population of Olmstead County, Canfield points out, is enough to make up four house districts. According to the state demographer's office, the ideal congressional district should have a population of 614,935. The population is state House district should be 367,713, and a Senate district twice that size.

Canfield thinks his best hope of getting what he wants is with courts, where there will be less chance for political mischief.

Not everyone is happy about the prospect of court resolution. Mark Asch, president of Common Cause, said lawmakers are evading their responsibilities to develop a plan. If they cannot come up with a plan, they should appoint a nonpartisan commission that can, he says.

"I think that to hand the job to the courts is an inappropriate use of the institution," Asch says. "If the Legislature can't do it, the Governor cannot come up with a plan working together, they should use their statutory authority and create an entity that can. There are a number of states that have done this. It works. It works well. But essentially, rather than working at a solution together, they let the people, they have chosen to put."

"I would like Rochester's districts to be more geographically honest rather than have the center of Rochester have seven spokes going out as far as Red Wing so that none of the seven house members has any true attachment to Rochester. I think it would work better if Rochester perhaps only had three or four districts," Canfield says.

The way it is now, some of the House members who represent portions of the city of Rochester, represent districts that are largely rural. Rochester residents in those districts don't feel that their interests are being represented, Canfield says. A much more logical approach, he thinks, would be to divide Rochester in a way that reflects the city's own communities of interest. For example, three older parts of Rochester could be grouped into a house district with its older suburbs and small communities to the south. Another house district could represent the northwest quadrant of the city and suburban areas, which are experiencing rapid growth. "That would be nice logical group of people, you have communities of interests," Canfield adds.

As commissioner of the state's Department of Trade and Economic Development, I've been given the opportunity to participate in a great state plan, Governor Ventura leading the way, our Minnesota Office of Tourism must continue to leverage the governor's international celebrity and tell the world — including a significant number of potential entrepreneurs, investors and workers — about the attractions we have.

As I look forward to these new challenges and new opportunities, I am reminded of one of the more enjoyable aspects of my job. Virtually every DTED program includes a local partner. All development occurs on the local level with state resources supporting, not leading, the local efforts. This gives me the opportunity to meet and work with a tremendous group of local leaders — mayors, bankers, entrepreneurs, workers, educators, and development professionals. Minnesota is blessed with a great cadre of leaders who make very optimistic about our future economic success.

Rebecca Yanisch is commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Trade and Economic Development.

New challenges and new opportunities

by Rebecca Yanisch

As commissioner of the state's Department of Trade and Economic Development, I've been given the opportunity to participate in a great state plan, Governor Ventura leading the way, our Minnesota Office of Tourism must continue to leverage the governor's international celebrity and tell the world — including a significant number of potential entrepreneurs, investors and workers — about the attractions we have.

As I look forward to these new challenges and new opportunities, I am reminded of one of the more enjoyable aspects of my job. Virtually every DTED program includes a local partner. All development occurs on the local level with state resources supporting, not leading, the local efforts. This gives me the opportunity to meet and work with a tremendous group of local leaders — mayors, bankers, entrepreneurs, workers, educators, and development professionals. Minnesota is blessed with a great cadre of leaders who make very optimistic about our future economic success.

Rebecca Yanisch is commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Trade and Economic Development.

Minnesotans for a Competitive World

by Jeffrey C. Smith

When I was a student at the University of Minnesota, I learned that it was important to be competitive. We had to compete with other states for business and investors. We had to be competitive in order to stay ahead of the curve.

Our state is a great place to live and work. We have a strong economic base, a talented workforce, and a high quality of life. We are a leader in many industries, including technology, healthcare, and agriculture.

But we cannot rest on our laurels. We must continue to work hard to stay ahead of the curve. We must be innovative and flexible, and we must be willing to change and adapt.

Our state is a great place to live and work. We have a strong economic base, a talented workforce, and a high quality of life. We are a leader in many industries, including technology, healthcare, and agriculture.

But we cannot rest on our laurels. We must continue to work hard to stay ahead of the curve. We must be innovative and flexible, and we must be willing to change and adapt.

Our state is a great place to live and work. We have a strong economic base, a talented workforce, and a high quality of life. We are a leader in many industries, including technology, healthcare, and agriculture.

But we cannot rest on our laurels. We must continue to work hard to stay ahead of the curve. We must be innovative and flexible, and we must be willing to change and adapt.
The strike goes on even after the strike on the economy.

If they can't negotiate salary contracts beyond the minimal amount passed by the Legislature and Governor, then why would they need to exist?

The Ferguson Falls Daily Journal (10/2) speculates the strike could have been avoided. "...state officials are right in their concern of providing wage increases the state can't afford if the economy goes sour. On the other hand, state workers in Minnesota have essentially cost-of-living increases eaten away by rising health insurance costs, and want to ensure their salary raises truly reflect the cost-of-living increases in the future. However, considering the two sides are $140 million apart on a nearly $3 billion payroll, it seems likely the difference could have been hammered out without a strike.

The Rochester Post-Bulletin (10/2) thinks the strike results back to the tax rebates. "Jill Zieren, state commissioner of employee relations, is quoted in the Star Tribune of Minneapolis as saying, "The state is facing its first revenue shortfall in over a decade. In addition, the number of layoffs in the airline, travel and hospitality industries continues to mount, meaning that thousands of Minnesotans face diminished income this year. Yet the union leaders have chosen not to accept the state's offer. He neglected to mention that one of the reasons the state is facing a shortfall is that the state, encouraged by Ventura, approved a $791.3 million tax rebate. If the rebate had been more modest, there would have been funds available to finance a somewhat more generous offer and avoid the strike.

Costs are too high! Minnesotans prepare to revolt because of premiums.

"A number of reasons have been cited for the relentless upward trend in costs of health care. One is the continuing increase in the cost of prescription drugs, which went up 21 percent per year in Minnesota from 1998 through 2000. Administrative costs for health insurance companies also increased 8 percent per year in the same period," reports the Rochester Post-Bulletin (9/26). "There is no question that the state is looking for new policies. If health care premiums continue to rise at 12 percent per year, many more businesses and consumers will be priced out of the market."

The Duluth News Tribune (9/6) fears the double-digit rise of an economic slowdown and expensive health care. "Even at a time of strong economic growth, employ- ers will want to see some return in both salaries -- not have their share in compen- sation prosperity be eaten up in health care premiums. But at a time of economic slowdown, the pressure as profits diminish will be to reduce benefits or to shift more of the cost of health care to workers."

Despite inevitable controversy, we need a new discussion on how to contain health care costs at the state and national levels. Without commitment to such a discussion, we can expect skyrocketing health insurance premiums to make health care increasingly unaffordable for employers and workers alike.

The Benjidi Pionner (9/9) is upset about the lack of a solution to the rising health care costs. "There has been much confusion at the state and national level about rising health care costs, but little has been done to contain them. It is important that health care coverage remain affordable for Minnesotans, especially the 500,000 who receive their coverage through small employer groups and the 200,000 who have private insurance coverage of their own outside of a group. The Ventura administration is seeking solutions, which could range from providing more competi- tion to more regulation, or a mix of both. The issue needs to be put on both the state and national priority list now."

Finding actually reflects a pattern that reaches back to the early 1980s. An important window of changes in the ongoing statistical representation of the state's "minority" populations. The year 2000 marked the inauguration of double-digit changes for the state's minority group (11.2 percent), up from 3.9 percent in 1980 and 6.5 percent in 1990. This rate of change is almost unsurpassed by any other group. The most dramatic upsurges since 1980 are to be found in the state's Asian and Latino communities. The 2000 Census figures for the Latino population, Minnesota's growing cultural group, for exceeded projec- tions from the late-1990s, a phenomenon repeated in many other states across the country. Minnesota's increasing Asian, Latino, and (to a lesser extent) African American communities are, indeed, a con- sequence of immigration, though not neces- sarily a direct one. A very large number of Minnesota immigrants have come here as secondary migrants from other states like Texas (Latinos) and California (Hmong).

Minnesota's immigrant experience differs also in that the state is one of the nation's primary destinations for refugees and new immigrants in the past decade, Minnesota has typically ranked among the top 10 in refugee resettlement numbers. This is not an anomaly; since the end of the Vietnam War, tens of thousands of refugees, mostly from Southeast Asia, have called Minnesota home. In more recent years, others have come from North America and Europe, Central America, and particularly from Africa. It still surprises many to learn that St. Paul's Hmong community of perhaps as many as 3,000 is regarded as the largest in U.S., while over half of the nation's Somali live in Minnesota, upwards to 25,000 in all.

"Why here?" is the natural reaction. The answer isn't simple and would make for a formidable research project in and of itself, beginning with a close look at the antecedents of Minnesota's most recent encounter with refugees. In particular, it would be important to go back to the immedi- ate aftermath of World War II, when Minnesota was a prominent supporter of the nation's decision to open its doors part way to those millions displaced by the war. It was one of the first states to establish a Citizens Committee on Placed Persons to lobby on behalf of supportive legislation. Minnesota organizations, particularly extensions of the

"What difference does it make what his name was...he was just a darn good Norwegian!"

Euthenes, Catholic, and Methodist churches, essentially the same membership in supporting and resettling refugees, and an important precedent.

But economic opportunity and kinship ties, shared among the Minnesota community of origin, brought the most immigrants to Minnesota. And this is especially evident in the latest notable trend. A large share of Minnesota's newcomers are settlers once again in the hinterlands, however, these transients aren't seeking land. They come for low-wage jobs in the pork and poultry processing fac- tories of towns like Worthington, Willmar, Marshall, and Mankato. Also unlike the ear- lier migration epoch, these newcomers are not from northern and western Europe. They are an amalgam of Latvians, Hmong, Somalis, and, most numerous, Mexicans and Mexican Americans.

Worthington, a town of about 10,000 people, has gone from just .2 percent minority composition in 1980 to over 22 percent in 1999. One local leader there commented recently that "the town that people who have lived here all their lives remember is gone; it no longer exists." In some of the locales, the new immigration has been welcomed as a desperately needed remedy to a declining economy, while in others, the attendant social complexity is that something that established residents have felt they did not ask for. Meanwhile, one has to wonder if the companies that have produced this condition have adequately accepted responsibility for assisting the communities in addressing the conse- quences. What is certain is that the cultural character of Lake Wobegon is in a state of momentous transition.

Joe Wiel is Curator and Assistant Director of the University of Minnesota's Immigration History Research Center.

Minnesota Journal October 23, 2001 7
It seems that with all the big lottery prizes offered over the past years that the state's lottery revenue would be growing. However, in many states the piece of the lottery pie is decreasing rapidly. Lottery profits grew only .9 percent in Minnesota between 1999 and 2000. Around the Midwest, Iowa, Nebraska and Wisconsin all saw profits decline -2.3, -9.1 and -18.5 percent, respectively. South Dakota was the big winner. Profits there rose 3.4 percent. —Scott McMahon.

Maybe one of the reasons our national discussion about Social Security is so confused, and so confusing, is the way we always seem to talk about "funding" things when we talk about paying for public services. We talk about school districts being "funded," or transit being "funded." And then we run into this notion of Social Security's "trust fund."

Technically speaking, to "fund" something is to set aside a large enough sum of money so that the activity in question can have its annual costs covered by the interest from that accumulated principal. It's in this sense that we talk about private-employer pensions, for example, being "funded." Activities that are simply paid for every year — that just get an annual appropriation — are not "funded." Schools, for example, are not literally "funded." Most services aren't "funded." They're "financed."

And as economists have been pointing out Social Security really isn't "funded," either. The payments that come in are spent for benefits; the (for the moment) surplus is spent on other things. The argument is about what other things. —Ted Kolderie.

Health-care costs are now back to double-digit annual increases after having fallen in the mid-90s. There are a variety of reasons for this; among them, surely, is our desire — reinforced by their doctors and elected representatives — not to be denied any service or procedure available that might conceivably be helpful.

Again and again we see the truth of Anne and Herman Somers' description in the mid-1970s of American health care; as (the only) system in which "reimbursement is guaranteed for costs that are neither controlled by competition nor regulated by public authority and in which no incentive for economy can be discerned." Clearly such a system cannot continue very long.

Minnesota used to be good at thinking how to deal successfully with this problem. Unfortunately it isn't, any more. Health care has become another good-guys/bad-guys debate. —T.K.

While filling out the required annual statement of ownership for the Journal, we consulted last year's statement, which was included in the On Balance section. That entire section was filled with editorial speculation and opinion on the fate of Governor Ventura's proposal to change the financing structure for public schools and reform the property tax. While "intriguing, challenging and interesting" all show up several times, the editorial writers were split on whether it was a good idea. But there was almost universal opinion that such a "radical" idea might not get anywhere any time soon. Must be why they're editorial writers and not odds makers. —Phil Jenni.

Out of this world. Efforts to extend the tax base in Los Angeles reached new heights when the Los Angeles County Assessor tried to tax eight satellites hovering 22,000 miles above the earth. The satellites are owned by Hughes Electronics, which is based in Los Angeles County, and are not being taxed by any other jurisdiction. The effort was blocked. Meanwhile, public hearings are scheduled to come up with the right way to say that satellites have no tax status in California. And people accuse Los Angelinos of being spacey. —P.J.

Minnesota goes international! While speaking at a recent Citizens League Mind-Opener breakfast, Vance Opperman reported that Minnesota ranks seventh among states for international trade. Sixty-five percent of the state's trade is agricultural based, and 70 percent is trade with Canada. —S.M.

Flexcar — a Seattle initiative allowing individuals to "check out" a car for a block of time — is gaining momentum. There are currently 1,300 members using the 42-vehicle fleet. There are other similar programs in Portland and Boston. But the next big thing may be station cars — a fleet of cars available at major transit terminals for people to use to get to and from the hub. Will a program like this help encourage the use of public transportation? We'll just have to wait and see. —S.M.

At a recent Citizens League meeting Randy Johnson opened things on a seriously gloomy note. "I think we all know the downside of living in the Twin Cities region. We start with the weather, over which we can do nothing. This is not a place that has great unique natural beauty. We have no oceans. It's about the dullest place the Mississippi runs throughout its course."

But one thing we do have is a hub airport. Although at certain times and weaker moments many of us may complain about our local airline, we should take a moment to count the many benefits of our hub. As Vance Opperman pointed out at the same meeting, one-third of metropolitan jobs — a payroll of $2.3 billion — are affected by the airport hub, 40,000 jobs are directly tied to the hub, and a recent study estimates that the presence of a hub airport contributes 12,000 additional high tech jobs to a region. —Michael Raja.

"Take Note" contributors include Minnesota Journal and Citizens League staff members.
League Board sets policy agenda for future

The Citizens League Board of Directors selected two new projects at its meeting on September 28. The first project is a short term study committee to help frame the questions for a broader look at reforming the public service system. The second project grew out of earlier discussions about how best to recognize and celebrate the League during the upcoming 50th anniversary of the League's founding.

The Board selected the public service topic from a menu of possibilities developed by a program selection committee co-chaired by John Adams and Missy Thompson. Other short term studies considered by the Board included an examination of water supply and quality in the metropolitan area and rethinking the structure of high school.

The 50th Anniversary Project

The Board approved the creation of a “blue ribbon” task force to reflect on the Citizens League's contribution to the community in the past 50 years and then sketch out important big ideas for Minnesota in the next ten years.

The task force is expected to celebrate the League's unique contribution to policy-making in Minnesota the last half-century. But it must also look ahead, at least for the next ten years, and ask how the League can continue to make a difference.

Setting the stage for the next ten years could include coming up with the “big idea” for areas in which the League has historically contributed such as: the economy, K-12 education, post-secondary education, energy and the environment, government and election reform, health and human services, metropolitan governance including development and housing, public service delivery, public works infrastructure, taxation and public finance, and transportation.

An overarching theme would relate to what is demanded of corporate and individual citizens for our state's future and how we can move forward on an active citizenship agenda.

The Board also recommended that the project conclude with a permanent outcome.

A Smarter, Leaner Public Service

The recent strike by some State employees has focused attention on the public service system. But lost in the immediacy of the current issue is the broader question of whether the existing public service system can attract the people and deliver the outcomes required in today's world.

Dramatic changes in demographics, service and budget expectations of the public and in the nature of work in the private sector are creating enormous strain on the public service system.

Up to half of the state and local government employees are eligible to retire in the next decade. But the “career pipelines” are not being filled. Only a third of the graduates of public administration schools actually go to work in government. There are many barriers to having public service viewed as an “employer of choice” by talented employees.

There is also a demand that public services provide better and quicker services to the public, businesses and other governments. Typically this has required the use of advanced information technology and redesign of services. There are significant barriers to redesign of services including statutory limits and multiple jurisdictions. Support for advanced information technology has been a challenge in the public service arena generally.
Looking back to our future

In designing the new anniversary project, the Board suggested that the process could be similar to that which preceded the League's seminal "Issues of the 80s" report.

Chaired by David Graven, the Committee on the Issues of the 80s, made up largely of League veterans, looked back at the League's contribution, but then determined what policy issues were most likely to emerge in the coming decade. The report then provided an intellectual framework for thinking about emerging issues. It focused particularly on incentives, choice, competition and decentralization as means for improving systems for delivery of public services.

The Issues of the 80s report had an extraordinary impact on the League and on public policy in Minnesota. More than half of League studies during the decade reviewed the delivery of public services within the incentive-based system approach. In addition, most of the League leadership during the decade — board members, committee chairs and presidents — had been members of the 80s committee.

League recommendations were successfully implemented in many service areas, including health care, solid waste, and most notably, education. The most significant report of the 1980s recommended that parents and their children be given the right to choose which K-12 school they attend. By the end of the decade Minnesota's choice programs, including the concept of charter schools developed by a committee led by John Rollwagen, had become a national model for education reform. Many League observers point to the League's education reform efforts as its most significant achievement.

The 50th Anniversary Project (continued)

For instance, the League could develop a local award for Minnesota policy innovations, modeled after the Harvard/Ford Foundation national awards.

In developing some permanent reminder of the League, the Board suggested that any such outcome be highly visible, recurring and self-sustaining, connected to important target audiences and relevant to the League's past and future accomplishments.

The Board and staff will spend the fall developing the proposal in anticipation of a launch sometime after the first of the year.

A Smarter, Leaner Public Service (continued)

This study committee is not designed to solve the problem at this time. Rather its task is to frame the issues to be addressed in Minnesota. For instance, what are the key questions and major areas of policy development to respond to these multiple challenges? If public service is to be competitive and be an employer of choice, what steps are needed in public service reform? What agenda should state and local governments pursue to respond to these challenges?

Please watch your mail for the sign-up materials.

Water, Water, Everywhere?

Minnesota is famous as the land of sky blue waters. The Twin Cities region shares in that bounty. Its lakes and rivers are often cited as one of the region's principal assets that make this a desirable place to live. From lakes to ponds and rivers to streams, our region has an abundance of water resources. But are we taking this resource for granted? Join us as the next Mind-Opener series examines the role of water in the Twin Cities.

Tuesday, November 13, 2001
Gary Oberts
Senior Planner, Environmental Services
Metropolitan Council

Tuesday, November 20, 2001
Lance Neckar
Professor, Landscape Architecture
University of Minnesota

Tuesday, November 27, 2001
Kent Lokkesmoe
Director, Water Resources
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Tuesday, December 4, 2001
Nelson French
Director
Friends of the Minnesota Valley

7:30-8:30 a.m.
$10 members; $15 non-members
(includes a continental breakfast)
The Nicollet Island Inn
95 Merriam, Minneapolis

Ample free parking is available