

# MINNESOTA Journal

A PUBLIC POLICY MONTHLY FROM THE CITIZENS LEAGUE

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## Doing the common good better

by David Broder

*Editor's note: Washington Post political correspondent David Broder appeared as the keynote speaker at Citizens League's 50th Anniversary Annual Meeting on Sept. 26. This is an edited transcript of his remarks, which focused on the issue of building consensus in American politics. The full text is available at [www.citizensleague.net](http://www.citizensleague.net).*

Let me start with something that is pretty obvious. The search for consensus implies that it is something that we once had and somehow lost and need to regain. And that assumption, itself, needs some examination. At the national level it is true, that during the long span of the Cold War...this nation pursued a very difficult goal and faced up to a very large challenge in the form of aggressive communism. And it did so under presidents and congresses of both parties and it did so at great sacrifice of treasure and of lives, and persisted in that goal until that final moment when we saw the wall come down. That is an extraordinary achievement for a free society. We had plenty of help from our allies, but without the leadership that the United States and its people furnished during that long span of years, that goal could not have been achieved.

But as all of us know, there were certainly times during that long Cold War period when there were very serious divisions in this country, and even savage fights. Harry Truman assailed the 80th Congress as the "good for nothing, do nothing 80th Congress" even though it had passed the Marshal Plan. Two presidents, Dwight Eisenhower and Richard Nixon, came to office largely because they said they would find a way to end active wars during the Cold War period that the political opposition did not seem

to be able to bring to a conclusion. And of course the Vietnam War, the Cold War in South-East Asia, divided this country as deeply, and not just the country but families and generations, in ways that all of us can still, I think, remember.

And yet it is true that for that whole generation, from Dwight Eisenhower through the first George Bush, that there were strong common bonds which held them together and would serve to temper even the most intense political battles. Those common bonds were very obvious in their sources. All of those men, and they were all men, had grown up in families during the Great Depression, and all of them had worn the uniform of the country during World War II. Two national experiences in which the United States survived perhaps the most serious economic challenge, and almost certainly the most serious military challenge in its history, only because Americans were prepared to put aside their petty or parochial or selfish interests and say this is something that we've got to do together, as Americans. And there was that bond that was forged for that entire generation.

To contrast that with the formative experiences of those who now lead the country—whether you think of President Clinton and the current President Bush, Tom Daschle, Trent Lott, Newt Gingrich, Dick Gephardt, or almost all the men and women who are in governorships and mayors' offices today—most of them came of age, politically speaking, in the '60s and '70s, and those were times of turbulence and real division in this country. It was the time of the civil rights revolution; it was the time of the

*Common good continued on page 2*

### I N S I D E

Viewpoint: The need for E-government

3

Homeland security for small cities and towns

5

Take Note: Policy Tidbits

8

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women's rights revolution; it was a time when there was a lot of experimentation going on, both in sexual behavior and the use of recreation drugs...it was the time when the country seemed to be coming apart over the issue of the wisdom, or even the morality, of the Vietnam War.

All of that came together for me one night during the Republican convention in Houston in 1992. The second night of the Republican convention was ladies night, and the featured speakers were Barbara Bush, the wife of the president, and Marilyn Quayle, the wife of the vice-president. I don't know if you happen to remember Marilyn Quayle's speech, but this was like two weeks after the Democrats had met at Madison Square Garden to nominate Bill Clinton and Al Gore. And the thrust of Mrs. Quayle's speech was essentially this "you saw those people in Madison Square Garden two weeks ago, they are my contemporaries but let me tell you, we weren't all like that." And she said it in just about that tone of voice. I turned to my friend and colleague Dan Balz, a wonderful political reporter at the *Washington Post*, who happens to be the exact contemporary of the Clintons and the Quayles and all of those other boomer politicians, and I said to him, "Dan, I suddenly have this clear picture in my mind that when you and your contemporaries get to the nursing homes, you are going to be leaning on your walkers, and beating each other with your canes because you never, even then, will have settled the fights that you were in during the 1960s and the 1970s." It was a time that really split that generation, and in some respects splits it now.

I was thinking to myself when I watched the television coverage of Tom Daschle on the floor of the Senate yesterday, his voice quivering with rage about those comments that President Bush had made. And I thought, "What is going on here? What is this?" Then it suddenly occurred to me. We are having a flashback to the 1960s, and the Democrats are saying, "You're trying to make us out to be unpatriotic because we are criticizing your war." And all of that emotion, I think, was bubbling again, as it bubbles up every

so often for that generation of Americans.

I think that is one reason why it has been so difficult to find our way to consensus and agreement in this country, but there are others. It goes in sociological jargon under the kind of fancy name of "the decline of the mediating institution." What does that mean? It means nothing more than the places where people come together to try and work out their differences and disagreements. You have to have forums for that to take place; you have to have assemblies where people actually engage with others who have different points of view. And when a country or a community lacks those forums, then you cannot find your way to that possible agreement or consensus.

### Mediating institutions

Now I have a bias about this because I am a political reporter, and so I tend to look first at the mediating institution that we call political parties. And that will strike you as a strange place to focus because I think in most of Americans' minds now, the political parties are not part of the solution to the problems of this country's division, they are the source of the country's division. They are the people who bring partisanship into what ought to be a search for good solutions. But when political parties operate well and have some strength and resiliency, they are institutions that serve to channel conflict and ultimately to resolve the kind of conflict that is inevitable in any complex metropolitan area, and certainly in a complex and diverse country like ours. They do it at two levels. Internally they try to mediate disputes between factions in the party, to put together a majority coalition or a coalition that has the potential for being endorsed by a majority of the voters. And externally they do it by negotiating with each other to find solutions. That typically has been done in the past by the leaders of the parties. And leadership in the political parties, like leadership in every other sector of our society, has become much more difficult to achieve and to sustain. But it was the function and it needs to be the function of the parties.

The people who are the new leaders, or bosses if you will, of political parties - the campaign consultants - would say, if they are honest, that the purpose of politics is to win on Election Day. And that is a very different proposition because it says to you that you have a license to use any tactics that will help your candidate get one more vote than the other candidate. And the favorite tactic, as we all know when ever we turn on our television, is to run a negative ad, which doesn't boost your candidate but tears down the vote for the other candidate. And that shift has turned American people away from politics and has made it far more difficult for those who are elected to then assemble and act as if they are members of something that constitutes a government.

Final point— political parties weakening has not left a vacuum, or if it left a vacuum that vacuum has rather quickly been filled. And it's been filled by another set of institutions, which has been around as long as any of us know the history of this country and that are themselves as American as apple pie. I'm talking about interest groups. Interest groups are very vital. They are vital at the local level and they are vital at the national level because when government at any level is making decisions that affect so much of our lives, it is important to be represented not just by the act of pulling a lever on your voting machine once every two years or so, but by having somebody who will actually speak for your interests at the seat of government and keep you aware of what that government is proposing to do. But interest groups, almost by definition, have narrower agendas than political parties do, which are very big and broad and diverse coalitions.

And what I learned, particularly in the health care fight in '93 and '94, was that there has been a real shift of power in this country from political parties to the interest groups. When President Clinton and Hillary Clinton launched their effort, they knew it was going to be a very tough fight. So they turned to David Wilhelm, the young man that they installed as Chairman of the Democratic National

# Viewpoint

## Electronic government services: 3 good reasons to accelerate it now

by Lyle Wray

As this Viewpoint was conceived, my clothes dryer stopped drying. I called a toll free number and was greeted by an intelligent voice recognition system that walked me through what I needed and scheduled an appointment for the next morning—all without touching any more buttons. The technician arrived on time, after an advance call letting me know that he was on the way. In addition to two tool bags and a mobile phone, he had a wirelessly laptop connected to the parts warehouse and central scheduling system, and a small receipt printer. When this second version of the laptop system is replaced, it will have a built in credit card swipe component to save technicians time spent keying in credit card numbers. The whole process took less than an hour from start to finish.

Over the past decade, the private sector has come to see the use of advanced information technology as a core strategic resource necessary to attain their mission rather than just as an expense to minimize. Despite the burst of the dot.com bubble, information, computing and telecommunication spending has leveled off at \$800 billion per year in the United States.

Businesses can justify upfront development costs for online services, which can

often be quite significant, if the business plan yields net savings or additional benefits over the life of the project. As an example, one of the low-cost airline carriers was quoted in a recent issue of the Wall Street Journal stating that the cost of a paper airline ticket was \$8.50 and the cost of an online ticket just 25 cents. Surely, an online ticketing system has substantial upfront costs, but the payback period is likely to be very short and the savings very important to the bottom-line.

The story in the public sector in Minnesota is generally quite different. We have a long way to go before big parts of the public sector's employees and processes are as well tuned as my recent appliance repair experience. While in many states and countries the mantra for a few years has been: have citizens get government services online and not in line, Minnesota has a mixed report card on electronic government services. Minnesota's legislative webpage ranked in the top five for tracking legislation and press releases in a recent study by the Rochester Institute of Technology [www.rit.edu/~930www/webnews/viewstory.php3?id=675](http://www.rit.edu/~930www/webnews/viewstory.php3?id=675). Yet, in a recent report, Brown University ranked the state of Minnesota government website 37 out of 50 states [www.insidepolitics.org/PressRelease02us.html](http://www.insidepolitics.org/PressRelease02us.html). Last year, Minnesota's ranking was 32. Five years ago we were in the top five. Minnesota will launch a redesigned Northstar website on Nov. 15, and the centerpiece sound file of the call of the loon will be retired. But that upgrade was developed for less than \$1.5 million, a small fraction of the cost much more complete and ambitious state government sites around the country and the world. Such a small investment is very unlikely to catch us up to where we need to be.

Why should we care about moving ahead faster on electronic government services? There are three main reasons. First, the state can obtain very real savings by streamlining public service processes and online transactions. Savings have been in the 20 to 80 percent range for many rou-

tine transactions. Second, electronic government can help citizens, businesses, governments and public employees do what they need done better and faster, in many cases, even if there are no cost savings. Third, electronic government services can help our state achieve strategic purposes. Australia launched an ambitious website to accelerate business development and Singapore has used an aggressive online e-learning strategy to bring their workforce skill level up to first world status in record time. Minnesota, too, faces a number of strategic challenges that might be aided by electronic government services, including improving educational achievement and teacher support, and addressing the health care workforce shortage, just to name two.

In the public sector in Minnesota, in particular, it seems that we do not yet view electronic government services specifically, or advanced information technology, as strategic investments rather than expenses. Projects are largely "bottom up" from within state agencies and not driven by an overall strategy or single funding source. Cost reduction in information technology spending seems to trump broader longer-range savings or benefits. But, as Minnesota government's share of 1.5 million resident baby boomers start leaving employment, the pressures for a "smaller, smarter public service" will mount substantially. It makes good sense for the state to follow the private sector and make strategic investments in electronic government services and advanced information systems. It will improve service delivery in the short run and result in reduced costs over the long-term. While it may be too much to expect that moving Minnesota ahead on electronic government services will be a core campaign issue, we do need to move this up on the action agenda in 2003, in spite of the mounting state budget deficit and indeed as a part of a long-range strategy for dealing with it. **MJ**

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### The Minnesota Journal

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Committee, and said, “David, we can’t do this just lobbying in Washington. We need some real grassroots support from the Democratic Party around the country. Please activate the Democrats in this country.” David Wilhelm pushed all the buttons that were available to him at the Democratic National Committee, and not much happened. At the same time, interest groups—the National Federation of Independent Business, the Health Insurance Association of America—said to their members, “This is the fight that’s going to affect all of us. We have to get engaged in that fight.” And they pushed the buttons that they had available. And guess what, the HIAA and the grassroots political lobbying network that the National Federation of Independent Business, deluged Capitol Hill with messages, and the members of Congress decided this is not a safe thing to be for.

Jump forward two years, Newt Gingrich is now the speaker of the House and the Republicans have now taken over. Newt Gingrich says, “If we’re going to take care of the budget and free up some money so that we can have tax cuts and do some of the other things we want to do, we’re gonna have to get a hold of this Medicare program.” The chairman of the Republican National Committee, Haley Barber, says, “Please don’t do that. I don’t need a fight over Medicare. We’ve just got control of the Congress.” But Gingrich says, “We have to do it for policy reasons or we’re never going to be able to pursue our agenda.” Haley Barber was a good soldier, so he said “Okay, you’re calling the signals, I’m not. I will see what I can do to help you.” So he pushed all the buttons and pulled at the levers that he had available at the Republican National Committee. Not much happened. But the AFL-CIO and the American Association of Retired Persons pushed their buttons and they had a powerful impact. And the Gingrich effort to change the healthcare system went right down the tubes.

So, what we have found now, at least at the national level and perhaps at the local level, is that interest groups pursuing legitimately their own agendas have become far more powerful as blocking agents than

the political parties and political leaders have in building support for their change.

### **Breaking gridlock from the ground up**

How do you overcome this? Well, obviously I do not have a 30-second solution. But I do think there is one thing and it is relevant to what you all are doing with this wonderful organization of yours. Because I think the answer clearly is if we are going to breakout of gridlock, we are going to have to do it from the ground up; we are not going to do it from the top down. At the local level—at the very local level—you can see the beginnings of some helpful signs. In fact, my experience as a reporter is that the deeper you go in American society and American politics, the more local the level you are looking at, the more reason there is genuinely to find some hope.

**Interest groups pursuing legitimately their own agendas have become far more powerful as blocking agents than the political parties and political leaders have in building support for their change.**

Neighborhood associations have become really important institutions in many of our cities. Crime watch programs, where people simply take on the responsibility to keep their eyes open and ...let the police know that something is happening that doesn’t seem right to them. I have seen some of the most blighted neighborhoods in my old city of Chicago, neighborhoods that had been written off by city hall, brought back by this kind of truly local initiative using these new tools. In a lot of the neighborhoods in Chicago, and I expect the same thing is true in other cities, the catalytic agency for this—the mediating institution—has been the local church, either a Roman Catholic parish or

an African American church. That’s the place where people feel comfortable coming together to talk about what they would like to see in the way of shopping in their neighborhood, schools in their neighborhood, police protection in their neighborhood, and often it is the local pastors who bring together the committee that really becomes the local leadership. It can happen. It is happening.

There is one final thing that gives me some hope as I come to the end of a career of covering politics, and that is that the tool that has dominated politics during the whole span of time that I have been covering it, television, is now for the first time being seriously questioned by the politicians themselves as to its efficacy. With the breakup of the television spectrum, with the fracturing of that audience

that used to be there, the politicians are beginning to wonder, “What am I buying when I spend all of my energy raising money so I can write checks to the television station to run my 30-second ads? Is that really the best way now to communicate with people?” Guess what? In a few places at least, they have begun to discover once again the virtues of the most old fashioned kind of politics that there is: somebody walking a precinct knocking on doors and talking to people face to face in their homes. That can make all the difference in the world because, as you know from

this organization, it is only when you engage people in that kind of face to face dialogue where they are not an audience for politics any longer, they are a participant, they get a chance to say what is on their mind and not just listen to what the politician has on his or her mind. It’s at that point that you begin to recreate that sense, “Hey, I own this system. They don’t own this system. I own this system, and it is mine to decide where I want it to go.” If that can happen, then perhaps the efforts that we are beginning to see can spread nationally. **MJ**

# Neighborhood style homeland security

by Sue Gehrz

Falcon Heights is a first-ring suburb with a population under 6,000. As a result of the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, the city of Falcon Heights initiated a multifaceted initiative to engage citizens of all ages in emergency preparedness and response. Strategies included conducting an intergenerational dialogue on homeland security that involved people of all ages in identifying local risks and resources; distributing two different emergency preparedness booklets to every household; and creating a permanent city commission to recruit, train, and support neighborhood volunteers.

## Developing a local security plan

Since Sept. 11, the active participation of volunteers has become crucial to preventing and responding to acts of terrorism in our communities. Federal, state, and local public safety budgets will never meet the need for the additional public safety

personnel necessary to fight a war on terrorism on our soil.

In the event of a major terrorist incident in the Twin Cities, city and county emergency response systems may be overwhelmed and our citizens could be isolated from assistance. The potential destruction to life and property from manmade disasters is so large that communities can no longer assume that mutual aid from neighboring first responders will be available.

Our city council members believe that the people who live or work in communities are in the best position to help identify potential security risks and resources in their neighborhoods. In order to increase our capacity to prevent or respond to manmade or natural disasters, we needed to mobilize and train more neighborhood volunteers.

After Sept. 11, people of all ages were asking, "What can I do to help?" From prior experience, we knew that including

representatives from all generations in planning and implementation would provide the largest pool of volunteer resources. Falcon Heights has had teens on city com-

**One of the primary goals of terrorism is to make people feel isolated and afraid. Including all the generations in homeland security efforts also helps citizens feel less vulnerable and can reduce potential "alert fatigue."**

missions and task forces for the past decade. We knew that each generation could bring specific assets and talents to local homeland security efforts. For example, young people "know" the streets better than older people. Older generations understand the importance of phone trees and crime watch. Younger adults often serve as police and fire fighters. Including all generations adds value and context to local preparedness planning.

One of the primary goals of terrorism is to make people feel isolated and afraid. Including all the generations in planning, training, and other homeland security efforts also helps citizens feel less vulnerable and can reduce potential "alert fatigue."

We also wanted to find inexpensive ways of distributing practical information about emergency preparedness to our residents.

## Mobilizing our citizens

We kicked off our initiative by sponsoring an *Intergenerational Dialogue on Homeland Security* on Oct. 29. That evening, 85 people who lived or worked in the city participated in a two-hour facilitated brainstorming and action planning dialogue to discuss what individuals could do to help fight terrorism on the home front. The participants, ranging in age from 13 to 92, represented five generations. Together they created 188 ideas, which were divided into six major cate-

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Signed, Lyle D. Wray, publisher. October 1, 2002

Security continued on page 7

# OnBalance

## Views From Around the State

*Flooding, Cuba and voting...policy issues during the campaign season.*

*Non-metro newspapers rallied readers and lawmakers in support for the \$32.4 million flood relief plan approved during a special session in September, and took state officials to task for taking so long to act. Here is a sampling of editorial voices from around the state.*

“What if 80 percent of homeowners in St. Joseph or all the residents of Albany had to deal with flood damage?” chided the [St. Cloud Times \(9/8\)](#). “Wouldn’t you expect the state to do all it could to help? Yet although that’s the scale of damage done by June flooding in northwestern Minnesota, three months later Gov. Jesse Ventura and legislators have yet to do their part. They need to convene a short special session and implement whatever state resources are available to Roseau-area flood victims.”

The [Duluth News Tribune \(8/29\)](#) did not want to see the flood relief needs of their neighbors bogged down in election politics. “All concerned—legislative leaders, Ventura, local officials and others—need to move with haste to get into a special session, enact a flood relief package and get out, leaving politicking aside—together with inappropriate introduction of unrelated measures that sometimes come up once the Legislature is in session. They’ll be back in January for other business—at least some of them will.”

The [Bemidji Pioneer \(9/13\)](#) pointed to the critical role state aid for flood victims would play in getting the area back on its feet and in keeping businesses in business and employees working through the winter. “The aid will help residents, businesses and farmers recover from losses that each locality or individual on their own could never hope to do,” the paper counseled. “In order to help keep, and hopefully, promote a vibrant economy in northwest Minnesota, state and federal aid is needed to help restore what was lost. Also an important part of the package is state aid to pick up the local communities’

share of Federal Emergency Management Agency grants, thus easing the financial burden on local governments. Property tax relief will also be targeted to farmers with large crop losses—farmers who probably saw property tax increases from the 2001 property tax reform rather than the promised decreases.” They also added, “Coming now, the relief will be well received by people who feared that winter would come without help, putting in jeopardy their futures as employers, workers and residents of northern Minnesota—and, ultimately, the economic vitality and quality of life in northwest Minnesota.”

The [Mesabi Daily News \(11/13\)](#) criticized state lawmakers for not acting earlier, charging that the metro-based government was neglecting the out-state issue. “Once again we find this to be another example of rural Minnesota not getting the same prompt attention as do the Twin Cities metropolitan and suburban areas. We believe that if Mother Nature had dealt such a haymaker to the Burnsville, Apple Valley and Shakopee area or any other suburban area there would have been a much more urgent call to St. Paul for legislators around the state.” They finished by stating, “When weather attacks any part of the state, causing millions of dollars of damage and extracting a heavy emotional toll on people it is not a local parochial issue. It is at these times that we are truly one as a state.”

In connection with Gov. Jesse Ventura’s trip to Cuba, two Minnesota papers suggested it was time to dump trade sanctions against that island nation. “As Ventura and countless others have noted, it’s time to end the obsolete, ineffective decades-old trade embargo of Cuba. It’s time to end restrictions on travel to the island,” declared the [Duluth News Tribune \(9/12\)](#). The [Rochester Post-Bulletin \(9/27\)](#) agreed, opining “The sanctions against trade with Cuba are obsolete.”

The idea of linking voting and patriotism was in vogue with editorial writers as Minnesotans went to the polls in primary elections last month. “It is time for Americans to exercise one of their primary rights and responsibilities—to vote.” exhorted the [West Central Tribune \(9/9\)](#). “Please do your part Tuesday in keeping America strong. Take a little time out of your day to vote. It is your right as well as a responsibility.” The [Red Wing Republican Eagle \(9/9\)](#) agreed. “Democracy is served best when the broadest possible spectrum of people select their lawmakers. It’s everyone’s right—and responsibility—to vote Tuesday.”

But following the primary, the [Republican Eagle](#) was less than enthusiastic about voter turnout. “Election observers point out that Tuesday’s turnout was well above the record low for a primary,” the paper noted (9/17). “In 1988, less than 10 percent of the state’s voters participated. However, last week’s turnout fell below the previous non-presidential election-year record of 19.6 percent set in 1998. Either way, it doesn’t say much for a nation that was parading its patriotic colors in full glory on the anniversary of 9/11.”

The [Rochester Post Bulletin \(9/26\)](#) argues that mental health care needs more support in funding and in policy. “Certainly more funding is needed, as it is needed for the health care system as a whole. Nevertheless, if preventative services are stressed and if many more patients can recover from their illness than is now believed, there will be an opportunity in the future to make the costs more manageable. Under public and private insurance plans, care for mental illness has received less financial support than care for physical ailments. This is due in part to the fact that mental illness is less tangible than cancer or a broken leg and in part to the fact that an unwarranted stigma still is attached to mental illness.” MJ

gories: pay attention to your surroundings; care for each other; maintain critical thinking; know and support public safety processes and procedures; hold public officials accountable; and live our lives.

Participating in the intergenerational dialogue helped people learn from the wartime and life experiences of all age groups. Here's a sample of participants' impressions.

"The uniqueness of this event was the multi-generational approach. It made us be our best selves! It prevented certain viewpoints from dominating and brought a sense of hopefulness to an anxiety-producing situation." (56-year-old participant)

"I learned to keep an open mind and it makes me feel a little safer." (13-year-old participant)

"This is the first time I have seen five generations work together." (69-year-old participant)

"The multigenerational format is absolutely crucial. Many people dismiss youth as having no valid contributions." (17-year-old participant)



The Falcon Heights way!

The next week, community service volunteers distributed a six-page flyer to every household. It summarized the 188 suggestions for what citizens could do to help prevent acts of terrorism and described the city's plans for increasing emergency response capabilities.

Two weeks later, the city organized a town hall meeting at which public safety personnel from our city and from the major institutions within Falcon Heights, including the State Fair and the University of Minnesota, described their homeland security plans and provided public safety information. This meeting was rebroadcast frequently on our local cable station.

In March, the city distributed a *Home Guide to Emergency Preparedness* booklet to every house and apartment as an insert in our city newsletter.

#### How do we sustain the effort?

As a result of these activities, many people volunteered to help implement suggestions from the Oct. 29 dialogue. They formed an intergenerational neighborhood security task force, which later became a permanent city commission called the Neighborhood Commission.

These commissioners are continuing to build our public safety capacity through recruitment and training of volunteers on each block to assist with emergency prevention and response. This includes identification of people with specialized medical skills, equipment or other resources. They have created a 50-page *Neighborhood Liaison Handbook*, conducted volunteer training programs, and planned for future enhancements of our resources.

One of the policy challenges we initially encountered in trying to find ways to increase the speed with which we could coordinate neighborhood resources was the state data privacy law that prevents city and law enforcement personnel from disclosing the names of block watch captains. Rapid citizen mobilization across, as well as within, blocks requires the block captains to be able to communicate with each other. Our volunteers overcame this barrier by creating a new position called neighborhood liaison to replace the block captains. They expanded the role to include

six different functions that could be spread among several volunteers on each block. They include information gathering, social organizing, communications, first aid, buddy checks, and crime prevention.

#### What have been the results so far?

The outcomes from these activities include:

- ▲ Increased public safety through a more informed and engaged citizenry.
- ▲ Improved emergency preparedness and response plans that utilize the unique expertise of all five generations.
- ▲ Increased recruitment of volunteer fire fighters.
- ▲ Ongoing mechanism for recruitment, retention, and training of neighborhood volunteers.
- ▲ Stronger informal social support systems in our neighborhoods.

It should be noted that at the same time we are building the capacity of our citizens, our city staff and elected officials have increased emergency preparedness training activities and are helping with the homeland security planning process for Ramsey County.

#### How can this apply to other cities?

We worked with an intergenerational consultant, Dr. James Gambone, to create a *Community Manual for Building Homeland Security through Intergenerational Dialogue* to enable other cities to replicate this citizen mobilization process. The Upper Midwest Community Policing Institute is offering training on how to use this resource.

More information is available on our city web site at [www.ci.falconheights.mn.us](http://www.ci.falconheights.mn.us). The *Falcon Heights Fights Back* summary of the Oct. 29 citizen recommendations can be found under Community Resources. The *Home Guide to Emergency Preparedness* is in the What's New section. The *Neighborhood Liaison Handbook* will be posted on our web site in the near future. MJ

Sue Gehrz is the mayor of Falcon Heights.

# TakeNote

Policy Tidbits

Some interesting nuggets to ponder during the long winter months ahead.

**Each year, the Charities Review Council reviews nonprofit organizations** against its accountability standards. The Council initiates reviews of charities about which it receives the highest volume of inquiries.

Council standards measure a nonprofit organization's compliance with minimum acceptable activity/performance in four areas—public disclosure, governance, financial activity and fundraising. The Council's current Giving Guide includes the list of 238 nonprofit organizations it sought to review (62 organizations did not respond to requests for information.) Of the 176 organizations reviewed, 127 organizations met all of Council standards and 49 failed to meet one or more standards. Governance and financial activity standards, not fundraising standards, were most often cited as unmet. —*Marina Munoz Lyon.*

**Minnesota Ranked highest in share of population working.** Mike Meyers, writing in the Sept. 29 issue of the *Star Tribune* described the results of a U.S. Department of Labor Survey on working populations of the states. In 2001, Minnesota had a greater share of the total population in the labor force than any other state, according to recently released statistics from the labor department. Overall, participation in the labor force in Minnesota is more than 9 percent higher than the national average. Based on 2000 Census data, the state also ranked first in high school attainment for those 25 and older, with 89.5 percent of that group holding high school diplomas. Nationally, the rate was 81.6 percent. In sum, Minnesota has a well educated, hard working workforce. —*Lyle Wray.*

**Mass layoffs last year hit 35,000 fellow Minnesotans.** The good news, according to the report *Dark Cloud, Silver Lining*, issued by the Department of Trade and Economic Development, is that 11.4 percent of those laid off have already started a new business, with another 17.7 percent following right behind. The report suggests that the list of policy responses to dislocated workers needs improvement in encouraging entrepreneurship. Possible policy initiatives can focus on access to capital and markets, good infra-

structure, and a policy environment friendly to creativity and intellectual property. The report is available at [www.dted.state.mn.us/PDFs/disloc-wkr-rpt.pdf](http://www.dted.state.mn.us/PDFs/disloc-wkr-rpt.pdf). —*Curt Johnson.*

**Minnesota in top ranks of legislative web pages.** Three professors from Rochester Institute of Technology's presented their study, *The Politics of State Legislature Web Sites: An Evaluation of Content and Design*, at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association in Boston earlier this month. The study looked at the content available to the average citizen and the "expert" user—journalists and lobbyists who would use such sites to track legislation, committee meetings, press releases, etc.—and how easily information could be accessed. RIT Political Science Professor Paul Ferber and his co-authors, Franz Foltz, professor of science, technology and society, and Rudy Pugliese, professor of communication, analyzed and rated the state legislatures' Web sites based on content, usability (including site design, ease of navigation and accessibility of information), interactivity (features promoting user/government communication) and identification of the sponsor who owns and controls the content of the site. According to the study, the states with the highest quality Web sites were New Jersey, Minnesota, Alaska, Hawaii, Oregon and Connecticut. Read more about the study at: [www.rit.edu/~930/www/webnews/viewstory.php?id=675](http://www.rit.edu/~930/www/webnews/viewstory.php?id=675). —*L. W.*

**Health care uninsured rises.** Robert Pear, writing in the Sept. 30 issue of *The New*

*York Times* reported on a Census Bureau finding that the number of Americans without health insurance rose to 41.2 million last year, an increase of 1.4 million over the previous year. Employees of small businesses made up much of that increase. The percentage of the population that is without health insurance also rose, from 14.2 percent in 2000 to 14.6 percent in 2001. The number of children without health insurance leveled off at 11.7 percent. —*L. W.*

**The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices** recently released its *Governors Guide to Emergency Management Volume Two: Homeland Security*. Billed as a security "primer" for governors, it outlines state-focused homeland security information, policies and procedures. The guide also addresses governors' national priorities as outlined in NGA's August 2002, *States' Homeland Security Priorities* issue brief.

The guide is distributed to all 55 state and territorial governors. In addition to management and structural issues, the guide discusses each potential terrorist threat at length—biological, agro, chemical, nuclear, radiological, and cyber. Chapters provide governors with detailed background information and checklists for each of these potential threats, identify federal resources and model response plans, and discuss how to prepare responses to these threats. The full report is available at [www.nga.org](http://www.nga.org). —*Scott McMahon.*

*Take Note* contributors include *Citizens League* and *Minnesota Journal* staff members.