



# Minnesota Journal

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A publication of the Citizens League

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## Milwaukee board sees self as 'agent for all children'

If you go by what you see in the media, you'd think the education-policy story about Milwaukee is vouchers. Not really. It's about the strategy and politics necessary to change and improve an urban district. And it is full of implications for the policy discussion in Minneapolis and Saint Paul.

by Ted Kolderie

This was clear in what was said July 30 by five people involved with policy in Milwaukee. They were speaking in a discussion at the national EdVentures meeting in Madison, Wisc. (EdVentures is a national annual meeting of people interested in new roles for teachers

and for boards of education. It is put on at the end of July each year and will be held in Detroit in 2000.) The five discussants were Howard Fuller, Milwaukee superintendent from 1991-95; Ken Johnson, elected to the board in April; Jason Helgerson, education aide for Mayor

John Norquist; Bill Reid, lobbyist for the Milwaukee Area Chamber of Commerce; and Bruce Thompson, chair of the Milwaukee board.

The two-hour discussion, here edited, went about as follows:

**Moderator:** Basic facts, first. The

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## Services critical to seniors with disabilities

by Kris Lyndon Wilson

Minnesota's population is aging. Over the course of the next 30 years the proportion of our population over the age of 65 will increase dramatically.

The Citizens League has been involved in the policy issues surrounding our aging population since it first partnered with the Minnesota Department of Human Services' Project 2030 Initiative. This effort resulted in the report *A New Wrinkle on Aging: Baby Steps to 2030*, published in December, 1998.

In its latest policy report, *Seniors with Disabilities in 2030: Getting Ready for the Aging Boom*, the League builds on that work to produce additional recommendations—this time for the Minnesota State Council on Disabilities.

The aging of our population will impact the disability community in a unique way. First of all, disability becomes much more common with age. Therefore as the population ages, we will see more individuals living with late-life disabilities, caused by things such as stroke, arthritis and hearing loss.

But 2030's senior population will also include a generation of individuals aging with life-long disabilities. Thanks to medical advances, these individuals are much more likely to reach their 60's, 70's and even 80's than any previous generation of individuals with disabilities. However, it is important to note that the aging process is unique for these individuals. Not only is it believed to begin earlier and progress faster, but it often includes the onset of a

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## Stakes high in state's unicameral debate

by Bill Brady

The stakes are high in the discussion of whether Minnesota should amend its constitution to eliminate one of the two houses of our legislature. Gov. Ventura has made it a primary issue for his administration. A handful of wealthy businessmen have contributed thousands of dollars to underwrite a campaign to convince you that having fewer elected officials is in your best interest. My involvement in this debate began to develop over the course of the summer as I listened to what I believed to be a series of exaggerated criticisms about our current system.

If there is one thing that both the proponents of a one-house and a two-house legislature can probably agree on, it is that the democratic process we have in this country and this state is a good one. When we

go about the process of changing our constitution, it should be done with a great deal of thought as well as clear and convincing proof that our current system must be changed in order to maintain its effectiveness. The danger that I fear with the current debate is that the discussion will focus more on the personalities involved and not on the process some seek to change.

The Governor obviously has a core group of followers that would like nothing better than to see him upset the so-called "political establishment". There are those that believe *any* change in the system would be good. There are also strong, dynamic leaders who favor the two-house system. These leaders will tend to attract followers as well, based on their reputations. In addition, individuals interested in

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# Information lacking on state seniors with disabilities

In its second report on aging in as many years, *Seniors with Disabilities in 2030: Getting Ready for the Aging Boom*, the Citizens League highlights significant demographic changes facing the state of Minnesota. By the year 2030, the percentage of Minnesotans over the age of 65 will double to 23 percent of the state's population, up from 12 percent currently. Furthermore, the number of seniors with chronic disabilities is also expected to double, from 135,000 in 1995 to 265,000 in 2030.

This growth comes from two distinct groups: seniors with late-life disabilities and seniors with life-long disabilities. Disability becomes much more common with age, so with an aging population more people experience such late-life disabilities as loss of hearing and loss of mobility. At the same time, thanks to medical advances, a large group of individuals with life-long disabilities are much more likely to reach old age than any previous generation of individuals with disabilities.

Minnesota faces this aging boom without some important tools for making and implementing good policy decisions:

- Perhaps most startling is the critical lack of comprehensive, **up-to-date information on people with disabilities** in Minnesota. The most recent statewide study to collect this

information was done more than 20 years ago. Since that time, the best available data have come from extrapolating from national data or applying old percentages to updated Census numbers. With leadership from Minnesota Planning, the Department of Human Services and others, we need to fill this knowledge gap.

- So too, we lack current **information about the number and types of seniors living with disabilities**. Where do they live? What services do they need? How much can they depend on family? The answers to these questions are crucial to shaping our social service infrastructure and putting public resources where they will produce the best results.

- We also need comprehensive, reliable information about the type and amount of **services available to seniors with disabilities**. Currently, the "word on the street" and the "official version of things" just don't match up. Conversations about transportation, housing and alternatives to nursing-home placement reveal countless anecdotes about particular services being unavailable in specific communities. This is particularly true for Greater Minnesota, but it also applies to certain services in the

Twin Cities area. However, research inquiries to Area Agencies on Aging around the state and a variety of service providers in the Twin Cities fail to substantiate the shortage or crisis suggested by these anecdotes.

This disconnect between the "word on the street" and the "official version of things" could be caused by a number of factors. A wide range of programs and services—operated by the public, private and non-profit sectors—are all intended to help people live more independently. It does not take long to realize, however, that there is a great deal of fragmentation and no single point of accountability. The variations in size, area of service, eligibility, funding source, fees charged and services provided are legion.

One frequently proposed solution to this fragmentation is the creation of a single point of access. But that is not necessarily the best way to ensure that all those who need services are connected to them. Calling for a single point of access is actually misidentifying the problem. The current problem is not multiple points of access, but the fact that these multiple points of access actually access multiple pools of information. Therefore,

what services an individual ultimately receives is determined, in part, by which access point they started at. Minnesotans need multiple points of access to a single body of knowledge. They need access to a comprehensive system that will present all possible options and necessary services, no matter where their original point of access.

Getting ready for the challenges of this demographic tidal wave must be a major priority for Minnesota over the next few decades. We simply cannot afford to continue on our current path.

In 1997, the state spent 19 percent of its total budget on health and human services. If the spending patterns of the 1990s were to be continued through the year 2030, the growth of our senior population would increase state spending on health and human services to 65 percent of the total budget. Obviously, these budget projections are unsustainable. We must, therefore, find more innovative, flexible, locally controlled and cost-effective ways to provide needed services to this growing population of seniors with disabilities. We need to start by using good information to inform sound policies that can be put in place on the ground around the state.

*Lyle Wray is executive director of the Citizens League.*

## Viewpoint

by Lyle Wray

# Editors favor lively debate, vote on unicameralism

**Star Tribune** said (Aug. 19) Minnesotans should beware of "bloat-ed promises and claims" for the

proposal to move to a unicameral legislature. It also said returning to a nonpartisan Legislature should be looked at separately from the proposal for unicameralism. **St. Paul Pioneer Press** said (Aug. 17) cost savings should be the least important reason to approve the change to unicameralism. "If 'less expensive' translates to 'less effective and responsive,' the trade would not be worth making." **Fergus Falls Daily Journal** said (Aug. 19), "The people of Minnesota deserve the chance, after several years of talk, to decide the issue for themselves." **Rochester Post-Bulletin** said (Aug. 18) it welcomes the debate over unicameralism and wants to hear all the arguments on both sides before making a commitment.

**Worthington Daily Globe** said (Aug. 19) Gov. Ventura will need the support of both houses of the legislative branch to get the unicameral issue on the ballot for a citizen vote. **Mankato Free Press** said (Aug. 18) voters will certainly begin to Gov. Ventura's proposal to put unicameralism to a vote of the people. **Duluth News-Tribune** said (Aug. 18) Minnesotans should not be denied the opportunity to vote on the issue of a unicameral legislature. **Red Wing Republican Eagle** said (Aug. 19) it's virtually certain that legislators would not put the unicameral issue

## On Balance

Multiple thoughts on one-house proposal.

on the ballot if a requirement is included to run on a nonpartisan basis. It questioned the proposal: "At this point, it's hard to see that the positives have enough weight over the negatives to justify the change."

**Duluth News-Tribune** noted (Aug. 20) that in three years, "the voters of Minnesota will render a public decision on whether it's appropriate for a governor to referee wrestling shows, or write a revelatory biography or do whatever else he might do to turn a buck in his spare time." But, the paper said, how can voters sensibly decide that without a full knowledge of who's been paying the governor, and how much and for what?" **Worthington Globe** said (Aug. 11) Ventura may continue to "push the envelope, and

his actions might cross the line of what is appropriate and what isn't." But the paper did not think Ventura's wrestling refereeing crossed the line. "As long as he doesn't hurt anyone or break any laws and some good can come out of it, what's the big deal?"

**Star Tribune** called (Aug. 11) Gov. Ventura's proposal to eliminate 135 legislative staffers' jobs "Baloney," saying, "legislators are only as good as the people around them." **Pioneer Press** said (Aug. 10) that Ventura "missed the mark" in suggesting lawmakers are misusing public funds to pay for partisan staff members. **Duluth News-Tribune** said (Aug. 10) just because there is little separation between politics and policy, that does not mean that scores of legislative

staffers should be eliminated. It is, however, healthy to question the number of staffers serving caucus and research functions.

**Pioneer Press** lauded (Aug. 18) St. Paul Mayor Norm Coleman for once again "keeping a lid on property taxes." Under his proposed budget, St. Paul would collect nearly \$3 million less in property taxes in 2000 than in 1993. In Minneapolis, in contrast, property tax collections are projected to grow by \$26.7 million between 1994 and 2000. **Post-Bulletin** noted (Aug. 27) that Minnesota's generous tax relief may not be as important to the state's healthy economy as efficiently providing citizens with good educational facilities and other needed services. **Republican Eagle** said (Aug. 26) the state ought to consider permanent tax reform as legislators debate next year's anticipated surplus.

# Another view: Use alternate charter board

This letter is in response to Jon Schroeder's article on charter schools ("Contracting elevates charter boards' role"), which appeared in the Aug. 24 *Minnesota Journal*. The main purpose of the article was to defend the idea of charter schools' hiring for-profit entities to run the schools. Schroeder was particularly impressed with the practice of contracting for "whole-school management," in which the for-profit entity literally runs the entire school.

I am one of those persons raising questions about "whole-school management" contracts between charter schools and for-profit entities. My concern is not about the basic merit of the idea. I am persuaded that for-profit entities can succeed in charter environments, just as many of them succeed in managing more traditional public schools.

My reservation relates to the governance structure of such schools. I believe that the traditional charter school management model in Minnesota—a separate board of directors having a majority of its members being licensed teachers at the

school—may not work properly in these situations.

My concern first arose when I had the opportunity to review the contracts between teachers and the Board of Directors at the Edison charter in Duluth. The contracts were clear that the teachers were expected to conform to the Edison corporation's curricular and administrative standards. Thus, the same group having a majority of the governing board (the school's teachers) also agreed to be subject to the teaching and management programs of the for-profit entity. In other words, the for-profit entity is in fact governing the school and not just running it on behalf of an independent governing board. And this, in my judgment, was not the intention of the charter school law.

I want to emphasize that I am not aware of any abuses at the Duluth Edison schools or anywhere else where such situations exist. I am not aware that the corporation or its teachers have in any way inappropriately exercised their authority. However, the potential exists.

It is my recommendation that in

those situations where a for-profit entity is engaged in "whole-school management" of the charter school, and teachers are expressly required to conform to the entity's corporate style and mission, that an alternative governance structure be devised so that at least a majority of the board members are truly independent of the for-profit entity. Perhaps parents or "outsiders" should together control a majority in such situations.

In summary, I do not challenge the idea that for-profit entities cannot deliver quality education. I do believe, however, that there needs to be a clear separation between governance and operation of the school. The same entity should not do both.

*Tom Triplett, president, College of Visual Arts, St. Paul*

*Editor's note: The College of Visual Arts is considering a request from the new Rochester charter arts high school to be its legal sponsor.*

# Supply crisis exists in affordable housing in Twin Cities

From CMAL Affordable Housing Study, *Council of Metropolitan Area Leagues of Women Voters*, May 1999.

There is clearly a housing crisis in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area...

There are several reasons for this crisis.

1. The federal government, a previous source of funding for public housing, has not built any for years. The current philosophy is to provide rent subsidies through Section 8 vouchers. These are of little help, however, when the housing does not exist.

2. Demolition has contributed to the shortage. According to a report from the Livable Communities Act, the year 1996 saw demolition permits issued for 1,062 units in the region, 45 percent of them in the center cities... Demolition generally occurs to upgrade a neighborhood or to make way for business or civic development—all in an effort to improve the livability of a city and increase the tax base.

3. In North Minneapolis, 770 units of public housing were demolished as a result of the Hollman lawsuit alleging discrimination in the large segregated housing project. Some of this housing is to be replaced on the site as it is redeveloped into 25

percent public housing and 75 percent market-rate housing. Eighty units will be rebuilt in areas of the city that are not impacted by poverty. Some will be located in the suburbs to "give residents more choice," but in the last three years, only 118 units have been completed, are under construction or have been approved in the Twin Cities suburbs.

4. Federal programs of the 1970s sought to encourage the development of affordable rental housing by including a provision that the mortgage could be prepaid after 20 years, and the property could revert to market-rate housing. Now many building owners wish to claim this

promise. The problem is complicated by the fact that the tenants in these buildings whose only income may be Social Security or Social Security Disability counted on the project-based Section 8 certificates. However, these are issued for only one year. Moreover, the now preferred portable Section 8 vouchers are hard to use, due to the scarcity of affordable units in general and the number of buildings that no longer accept Section 8. In some buildings the rent has been raised above the HUD defined FMR.

5. In the newer suburbs there are many jobs at entry level wages, but people who do this work cannot afford to live in those communities.

## The Minnesota Journal

Publisher — Lyle Wray

Editor — Dana M. Schroeder

Contributing Editor — Ted Kolderie

Sketches — Ray Hanson

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# Legislature

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single-issue politics might be tempted to evaluate their support based on what is best to promote a narrow agenda. Yet the constitutional change we are discussing will far outlast the personalities and issues involved in this debate. People and issues will change, but the process we utilize to guide our elected officials is not likely to change. We should expect to live with a constitutional change for at least the next 100 years.

I believe that both proponents and opponents of this initiative simply want what is best for Minnesota. We obviously have a serious disagreement about the system we want to guide our law-making branch of government for the years to come. Is the legislative process in need of such a drastic change? We say no. Could the current system stand improvement? Most definitely. It is our right and responsibility to try to improve our democratic process.

The proponents of a single-house legislature focus their argument on four fundamental themes: openness, accountability, responsiveness and efficiency. Let's take a few minutes and examine each of these arguments.

**Openness.** Under our current system we have 201 legislators, 67 Senators and 134 House members. House members serve two-year terms, while Senators serve for four

years. Senate districts are twice the population size of House districts. In order for any piece of legislation to become law, it must be approved by a majority of the membership of both the Senate and the House. The law-making process is a slow one under our current system. The process is filled with roadblocks that make new legislation difficult to enact. Many times legislation can pass one house but not the other.

I believe this slow, deliberate process serves citizens well. The process serves to help expose many well-meaning ideas that in reality simply do not need to be passed into law. For every issue that is featured on the front page of your newspaper, there are hundreds that are introduced, studied, debated and sometimes passed.

Your ability to interact with the legislative system would be more difficult with fewer legislators. Currently you have two individuals in the legislature elected to represent your interests and area of the state. Because the current system is so diffused there are many points of entry into the process for citizens. Under a single-house system the number of legislators directly accountable to you would be reduced in half. For many rural areas of the state, such a loss of legislators will mean no one from their immediate community representing them in the legislature.

**Accountability.** The argument the single-house proponents use is that if people understood the process better they would be more directly involved and therefore would hold

legislators more accountable for their actions. I have not uncovered one piece of factual information to substantiate that argument. On the contrary, Minnesotans currently participate at a much higher rate in their political process than almost any other state in the nation and certainly at a much higher rate than Nebraska, the only state with a single-house legislature.

I am no expert on Minnesota political history, but in my two years living in Minnesota, I have witnessed a stadium debate that literally burnt out the telephone switchboard at the Capitol. I watched Minnesotans elect the first Reform Party governor in United States history and reverse control of the House of Representatives from the DFL to the Republican party. From my vantage point Minnesotans don't seem to have much of a problem holding their elected officials accountable for the decisions made.

The reality is the accountability of elected officials has little to do with a one- or two-house legislature. Elected officials are held accountable through elections. Quality candidates competing for each legislative seat will make those elected more accountable.

**Responsiveness.** One argument advanced by the single-house supporters is that too many decisions are being made by too few legislators. Last-minute deals are struck and rank-and-file legislators are forced to go along or else vote against bills that are 90 percent good. The single-house solution to this problem is to reduce the number of legislators. Yes, they propose to decentralize legislative authority by making the legislature smaller.

So, instead of legislative leadership in the House and Senate who are forced to ultimately work together, under a single house, we would have one set of leaders. Instead of two tax chairs, we would have one chair. Instead of the current situation, where each party controls one house, we would always have one party in total control. Now logic would lead one to assume that the potential would exist for the leadership of a single house to wield more power without the other house to check its decisions. But the single-house people argue that safeguards could be added to their system to guard against that prob-

lem. These safeguards, incidentally, will have to be enacted by the legislature, after the constitution has been changed. None of these safeguards would be contained in the amendment you would be asked to approve.

**Efficiency.** Currently the total cost associated with the Minnesota Senate is \$25 million dollars. By eliminating the Senate could we expect to save that amount? It is unlikely that Minnesotans would see savings anywhere close to that amount. I see no evidence that citizens will be expecting less work out of their legislature. Does anyone honestly think people are going to quit calling their elected officials? The remaining legislators are going to be expected to pick up the slack. Once again legislators will decide whether they need more staff, more legislative days, more travel reimbursement in order to service the increase workload. There is already a great deal of pressure on part-time legislators to dedicate more time to legislative issues. Fewer legislators will increase the pressure toward a full-time legislature similar to California's system. California has far fewer legislators than Minnesota but its legislature works year around and is compensated accordingly.

If you remain unconvinced, proponents of a single-house argue, "Just let the people vote." What could possibly be wrong with letting the people vote?

Legislators have a responsibility not to place a constitutional change in front of the public that they do not believe is in the public's best interest. People who expect legislators to vote in favor of a constitutional amendment they personally do not believe is right for Minnesota are encouraging a level of dishonesty in politics they so readily abhor.

*Bill Brady is chairperson for the all-volunteer Opponents of a Unicameral House (OUCH). He served 16 years in the Kansas Legislature, 10 years in the House and six years in the Senate. For more information on OUCH contact Brady at 651-481-0275 or access the group's website at [www.twohouses.com](http://www.twohouses.com).*

# Aging

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and disability as well.

Disability is commonly defined as the inability to complete at least one task of independent daily living, such as cleaning, grocery shopping, paying the bills, bathing, dressing and eating. The ability of seniors with disabilities to live independently often depends on the quality and availability of health care, long-term care, housing and transportation services.

## Health care

As frequent users of our health-care system, seniors with disabilities stand to benefit significantly from two current trends: an increased emphasis on chronic care and the continued de-institutionalization of health-care delivery.

Chronic care uses interdisciplinary teams to manage care across settings in coordination with the other medical professionals and care providers involved with a given patient. It requires sharing information, focusing on long-term functional goals and empowering the individual to be part of the decision-making process. Chronic care also attempts to anticipate the next stage of disability progression and to minimize, prevent or delay that progression, thereby allowing individuals to maintain their functional abilities longer and preventing the need for high-cost services in the future.

Continuing to shift towards a chronic-care model will be a long-term process, though, requiring systemic change in multiple areas. Chronic care requires a group of providers who are trained differently, a longer term outlook for determining success or failure, an information system that supports doctors and a reimbursement system that rewards success.

Another shift in the health-care industry that will benefit seniors with disabilities is the de-institutionalization of health-care delivery. The number and type of settings in which care and treatment can be provided is expanding. Care that was once provided only in a hospital, doctor's office or nursing home can now be provided in a home or community setting, thanks to the

expansion of home health care and advances in medical technology.

## Long-term care

It was not long ago that living with family or entering the local nursing home were the only options for individuals needing long-term care. Today, however, there are numerous alternatives to the traditional nursing home, including home care, assisted living, adult foster care and adult day care. In many cases, these alternatives are less expensive, more desirable and more appropriate to the individual needs of a given person. However, many Minnesotans do not have access to these options, either because they are too expensive or there is no facility or provider nearby.

One example of a long-term care option that needs to become more universally available is assisted living. Assisted-living facilities typically resemble apartment complexes, where residents have small, private living quarters and can receive services ranging from meals, social activities and house-keeping to personal care and medical treatments.

Despite the fact that new assisted-living facilities are popping up around the state, even saturating the market in some areas, there is a strong need for greater access to this option. Providing assisted-living services in existing structures and separating the cost of housing from the cost of services are two ways to increase the availability and affordability of this option.

In order to meet increasing demand, the long-term care industry will also have to overcome a long-term labor

shortage that is currently expected to last well into the next century. Given the realities of a shrinking workforce, long-term care responsibilities are going to have to be met increasingly through care networks at the family, community and neighborhood level.

## Housing

In order to remain living independently in the community, seniors with disabilities need housing that is accessible, affordable and connected to services. Unfortunately, the majority of our current housing stock, both old and new, lacks even the most basic accessibility features, in terms of architectural and interior design and location to services. Without a redirection of housing development and sensible housing rehabilitation, our housing stock will be unable to meet the changing needs of our aging population.

But 30 years is a long time in terms of housing development. Communities have the opportunity to build entire developments between now and 2030 that are accessible to individuals with disabilities. Including accessibility features in the original construction of a home is significantly less expensive than having to renovate the home at a later date.

Consumers must begin to plan ahead for their own inevitable aging and the very real possibility that they will acquire some sort of disability as they age.

## Transportation

In many ways transportation services are the glue that holds all the pieces together: the key to allowing seniors with disabilities to live independently and to providing access to a wide range of other services.

In the Twin Cities area, paratransit services for individuals unable to use the regular route bus system are provided by Metro Mobility. In 1998, Metro Mobility provided 667,979 rides. Nonetheless,

less, the major transportation issue for individuals with disabilities in the Twin Cities continues to center around the fact that not everyone who needs a ride on Metro Mobility is always able to get one. In 1998, Metro Mobility's official trip denial rate was 3.5 percent. However, conversations with Metro Mobility riders and disability advocates indicates that rides are much more difficult to get than this statistic suggests.

While at first glance the obvious solution is to expand Metro Mobility service, this seems unlikely to happen, given the high cost of providing paratransit services. Therefore, other alternatives must be explored.

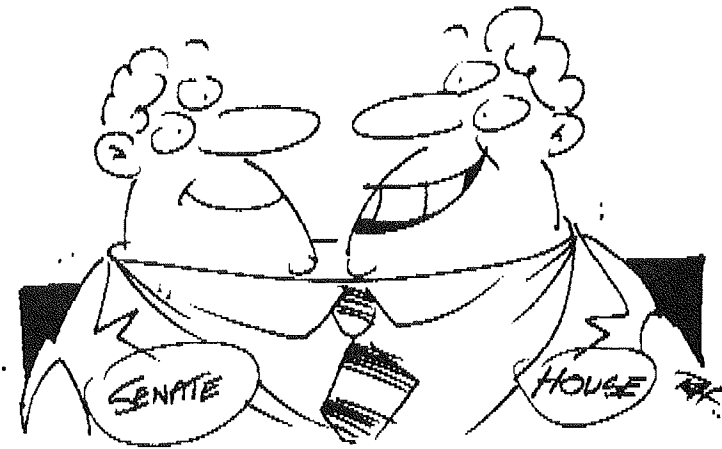
At the heart of the complaints about transportation is the fact that when an individual cannot schedule a ride on Metro Mobility, they have very few other options. They could purchase service from one of the Twin Cities' numerous private providers of accessible transportation. However, these services are significantly more expensive than Metro Mobility. A second option would be to contact a nonprofit, community-based service. Unfortunately, while these services are essential gap-fillers, they tend to use their limited resources primarily for transportation to medical appointments and often cannot help someone trying to go to the grocery store, library or theater.

Therefore, while Metro Mobility provides a significant amount of accessible transportation and a variety of nonprofits serve as gap-fillers, a need remains for additional transportation options that are both affordable and unrestricted.

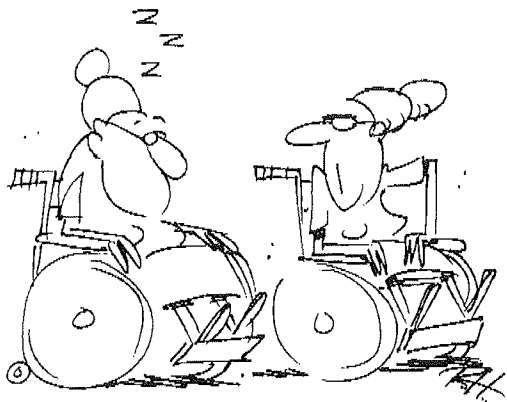
One option worth exploring is bringing the taxi industry into the business of providing transportation for seniors with disabilities. Taxis are more affordable than the private providers of accessible transportation and, with enough supply, they allow maximum independence and spontaneity.

In Greater Minnesota, there is a significant need for more comprehensive transportation. There are currently 75 public transit systems in Greater Minnesota—59 county or multicounty systems and 12 municipal only. Unfortunately, the

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"It's obvious, two heads are better than one! Right?"



"If we use our own wheels we could make it to your doctors' appointment by Thursday... or call for transportation and wait 'til October!... What do you think, Mother?...Mother?"



# Milwaukee

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city of Milwaukee is bigger than Minneapolis and St. Paul combined, though the metropolitan area is half the size of the Twin Cities area. The Milwaukee district has about 105,000 students, more than Minneapolis and St. Paul combined. About 37 percent of the

freshmen graduate four years later. There are about 25,000 in nonpublic schools. Of the roughly 13,000 school district employees, about half are teachers. Eighty percent of the students are nonwhite, mostly African American; about 10 percent Hispanic. About 18 percent are white. Twenty years ago 80 percent were white. The teaching staff is still almost 80 percent white.

The board has nine members: eight

elected by districts, one at-large. The teachers' union, the MTEA, is the National Education Association's largest local. The district spends about \$1 billion a year.

**Q:** Tell us about the April election. **Thompson:** Four district seats were up and the at-large seat. Our reform coalition won all five.

**Q:** How much was spent? **Thompson:** If we only knew! About

\$250,000 by our coalition, \$180,000 on the at-large race. We think the union spent more, but it isn't fully reporting; it claims it was "issue advertising." We now have a seven-to-two majority.

**Q:** What will the new board do? **Johnson:** We dropped our superintendent and appointed Spencer Korte, a principal. We're trying to get state aid for an additional person in the classroom, trying to cash out transportation aid to have more neighborhood schools. We'll favor school-level councils to help select the principal and teachers. We want the principal to run the school.

**Fuller:** As superintendent I had pushed for a whole package of options, for parents and for the board: decentralization, charters, contract schools. This caused the union to run a slate against me. We have to open up to innovation; we have to move boards to policy and out of service delivery.

This has been a 23-year struggle. It began with a desegregation plan that put the burden on black children. When we tried to ask about student achievement, the district would not release the data: It did not want parents to know how poorly their children were doing. There was a suit to set up a metropolitan district. We thought this would not lead to better achievement. We proposed a separate, black district for north Milwaukee. This passed one house. The district hired Bob Peterkin and Debby McGriff to "quell us." Then Polly Williams proposed the first voucher program. Gov. Thompson signed the bill. Later the charter program came along. Now we have a coalition that works together for the broadest possible options. And we now have a board that sees itself as the agent for all children.

**Q:** What is the voucher program today? **Thompson:** In '95 it was opened to religious schools, too; 15,000 students are authorized. There are now about 8,000 enrolled. The litigation has ended, with our Supreme Court ruling favorably and the U.S. Supreme Court declining to review.

**Q:** What's the state's attitude? **Bob Wood, Gov. Thompson's chief of staff:** We saw a district where the

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# Milwaukee

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average grade was D+, where half teachers had their own kids in private schools. There was no way we were not going to risk change. We gave the district authority to close failing schools and gave the city and the universities the authority to grant charters.

**Helgersen:** Mayor Norquist is a Democrat, but on education he's on the same agenda. We have to advocate for change.

**Q:** In every other big Great Lakes city the mayor went for takeover of the schools. **Helgersen:** We didn't think who runs it was the key. We wanted to empower parents with options. In supporting the reform slate this spring, the mayor took some chances. He runs again in less than a year and the opponents might come after him. So far the city is the only "alternate sponsor" creating charter schools. The first opened in the fall of '98.

**Fuller:** Once their litigation fails, the opponents will try to "help," posing to "prevent abuses" with regulations intended to restore the old bureaucratic model. **Reid:** We now see bills from long-time opponents, saying "We want to help charter schools be more successful!" **Fuller:** We've also had to fight the "right wing" charge—the notion that African Americans shouldn't work with business and conservatives. There's no choice, since the "left wing" offers the status quo. We have an amazing coalition. But it's always under stress.

**Q:** How does the board feel about this competition? **Thompson:** The old board was adversarial. But we want to get away from holding kids captive. Citizens don't have to send their kids to MPS in order to vote.

**Q:** Business always says education is important, but doesn't always play the role it does in Milwaukee. Explain. **Reid:** There was concern about offending the unions. But basically the CEOs understand competition. They know what lets organizations change. **Fuller:** Some are more radical than in most cities, where "fuzzy altruism" is often the rule. The Milwaukee CEOs have taken the flak about

"You don't live in the city"—as if the NEA lives in the city! They have put up the money for the organizing, made the phone calls. Tim Sheehy, president of the Chamber, was very important. They aren't scared off when it really comes to the fight.

But it can't be done with money alone. It takes grassroots work. Ken was knocking on doors for 10 months ahead of the election. There is a serious base here, this is not a paper coalition. You come here to challenge us, you are going to have a fight. People for the American Way scheduled a rally here to oppose choice and brought in Jesse Jackson, Jr., from Chicago. We scheduled a counter-rally: same day, same hour. They had 200 people; we had 500.

**Q:** Nobody's mentioned the media, the newspapers especially. **Fuller:** It helped enormously when Joe Williams became the education reporter. We spend a lot of time talking with people on the editorial pages, too. Also the radio talk shows; especially to the African American audience. **Thompson:** Before, all the reporting was like covering a Punch and Judy show: about people fighting. The reporting began to help people understand the issues at stake.

**Reid:** The state also has to do things for the district, where most of the kids will still be enrolled. **Helgersen:** The mayor also has a "compact" with the district, to help. **Fuller:** Our coalition can't just say, We're just going to help charters and choice. You've got to work both outside and inside. We always strategize from that perspective. It's not anti-union: There are reasons why teachers organized. We're opposed to the way this union deals with our children.

**Johnson:** I'm a journeyman electrician. I had to explain to the building trades why I was against the teachers' union slate. I said we represent our people, but in the trades none of us would think it's the duty of the union to run the company. The teachers union was "running the company." The unions supported me. I won, 58 percent to 42 percent in my district. Teachers voted for me. I'd knocked on their doors. They knew I was for good schools.

**Q:** Will the new board heal rela-



"Don't think of us as just grown-ups, my boy...think of us as your agents!"

tions with the union? What are board members doing that's different? **Johnson:** The president of the MTEA is in my district. I told her: "It's you who's making me out as an enemy of teachers." I'm not. At the moment the union is not even coming to the board or committee meetings, which is amazing. I'm going to community meetings. I return all phone calls. I'm in schools, where I'm told I'm the first board member they've seen. We will empower parents at sites. We will let some schools be autonomous. We will stay with policy and let the superintendent handle the personnel, building maintenance, etc.

**Q:** Isn't there a negative financial impact when kids go to other schools? **Johnson:** We have big waiting lists for our specialty schools; when we turn parents away, they don't go to MPS at all. We can expand those schools and also get students from outside Milwaukee.

**Thompson:** We're really just at the start. Now we have to translate these changes into student achievement. We have to replicate the success of the schools that do far better than their demographics would suggest. **Fuller:** We have to be willing to reappraise our strategies as we go along. We also have to keep finding new leadership. Old heads like me should not try to hold on.

**Johnson:** Twenty years ago I was a freshman in high school, showing some initiative. (Howard) saw that, and invited me to a summer camp on leadership, told us this was our responsibility. Today I'm on the school board. **Fuller:** I don't want us just to complain there aren't

enough people of color in the discussions about education. It's my responsibility to do something about that. I decided to call a national meeting of 200 African Americans, age 25 to 35, about options. We'll do it again next March. I want us to go into these discussions with an effective presence. I want to get more black elected officials involved. Look at the poll data: It's in the African American communities and among young people that support for choice is rising most rapidly. They're the least tied in to the existing system.

*Ted Kolderie is contributing editor of the Minnesota Journal and served as moderator for the Milwaukee panel discussion at the 1999 EdVentures meeting.*

## Aging

Continued from page 5

majority of these systems have limited hours and days of operation, as well as limited areas of service.

More importantly, though, there are too many counties in Greater Minnesota that have no public transportation. Currently, eight counties have no public transit service at all, and another 13 have municipal service within their borders, but no county-wide system.

*Kris Lyndon Wilson is a research associate with the Citizens League. She staffed the committee that produced the report, "Seniors with Disabilities in 2030: Getting Ready for the Aging Boom." The report is available on-line at [www.citizensleague.net](http://www.citizensleague.net) or by calling 612-338-0791.*



# Unicameralism: Debated in '30s, used in Canada

**Longtime League member** Ken Dols recalls that unicameralism was a Minnesota high school debate topic in the mid-1930s. Keep in mind that in 1934 unicameralism was debated in 22 states but only passed in Nebraska. It's curious that an issue that was so widely debated during the ferment and unrest of the Depression should surface again when times seem so good.—*Phil Jenni*.

**Why not get rid** of the executive branch, too?

Although Nebraska is the only American state with a unicameral legislature, all of Canada's provinces have abandoned their upper houses, with the most recent to go being Quebec in 1968. Of course, the provinces also operate on a parliamentary system, with no separate executive branch: an arrangement that was, incidentally, raised by the Commission on Minnesota's Future in 1977.—*Dave Chadwick*.

**Page One** of the newspaper Aug. 30 was almost entirely local: a poll report on how many people have access to the Internet, a report on metro housing, a crime story in Minneapolis, a feature on a street musician in southeast Minneapolis, a story about Rev. Billy Graham in Minneapolis to eulogize his late colleague, George Wilson. And a promo for Minneapolis' three-day music festival.

The "newspaper of the Twin Cities"—the *Star Tribune*? Nope: The *Pioneer Press*—the edition home-delivered in Saint Paul, no less. The words "Saint Paul" are now a little hard to find at the top of Page One.—*Ted Kolderie*.

**When public education** took its present form the schools were literally full of children, Mary Lee Fitzgerald reminded the EdVentures meeting in Madison, Wisc., on July 30. (In Minnesota as late as 1950, the median years of school completed by persons over age 25 was 9.5.) Today, she said, with most students attending until age 18 and with the falling age of puberty, the schools are full of people who are really adults, being treated still as children. Fitzgerald was commissioner of education in New Jersey for Gov. Florio.—*T.K.*

## Take Note

*"I hold it, that a little rebellion, now and then, is a good thing, and as necessary in the political world as storms in the physical."*—*T. Jefferson*

**Results of the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)** covering 50 countries and the state of Minnesota had good and bad news for Minnesota. Elementary students in Minnesota performed comparatively well in mathematics and science, but middle school and high school students were below many other countries. Given the importance of mathematics and science skills for competing in the new economy, such results should be seen as a wake-up call for improving our schools. See the following website for more information on TIMSS: <http://carei.coled.umn.edu>.—*Lyle Wray*.

**Next time you hear talk** about your school district building another new building because enrollments are rising, ask: How many utilities build permanent capacity to handle a short-term peak of demand? The "growing enrollment" that districts talk about is a short-term peak of demand. As the business manager in Rosemount/Apple Valley said when that district was considering two new high schools: "We'll be closing those buildings before they're paid for." There may be ways to handle that temporary bulge in enrollment that are both better economics and better education.—*T.K.*

**A recent fact sheet** by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency noted that while about 35 million personal computers were sold in the U.S. in 1998, 20.6 million became obsolete. By 2002, the number of obsolete computers is projected to exceed the number sold each year. Containing heavy metals, PCBs, and other hazardous substances, computers and other electronic equipment can pose serious disposal threats if not handled properly.—*D.C.*

**It is sort of stunning** to consider that a gallon of mineral water costs more than a gallon of gasoline. Some day, maybe, somebody will realize that "motor fuel" is potentially a major source of general revenue. It's a broad-based tax, not necessarily less equitable than real

property as a base for public services, capable of generating quite large amounts of revenue, with useful side-benefits for the environment and already in place.

At the moment the gas tax can only be used to build and repair roads. But if we rethought the level of this tax, we might find both tax reform and road repair within the range of possibility.—*T.K.*

**Promoters had to say** recently the Hiawatha Ave. light-rail project could not do much to move people in and out of a stadium built along the line: two-car "trains," carrying 240 people each, arriving every eight minutes.

Someone might look at the circulator in downtown Detroit, which moves about 8,000 people in and out of Joe Louis Arena on a night the Red Wings are playing: vehicles on two-minute headways. It will also help serve the new downtown baseball stadium. An upgraded, two-track line would do much better. That "people-mover" technology, also installed in Vancouver, B.C., is built by the same (Canadian) firm that would like to sell the LRT cars here.—*T.K.*

**A real conversation** with a member of a Twin Cities suburban board of education:

**Q.** When the negotiating committee agrees, does your the board tell the public the size and shape of the contract/settlement proposed?

**A.** No. Not until the board has

acted to adopt it.

**Q.** But the union tells its constituents?

**A.** Yes. Before the members vote.

**Q.** Why doesn't the board tell its constituents, too?

**A.** Don't know. Never have.

**Q.** Well, when the board is considering the budget for the coming year, does the board show that to the public?

**A.** Yes, we have hearings.

**Q.** And on proposed capital-improvement programs?

**A.** Yes, that's public too.

**Q.** What's the rationale? Why the difference?

**A.** Don't know.

**Q.** What if the proposed settlement did go to a public forum, so its implications for program and class size could be discussed?

**A.** That might increase the chances of a strike.

**Q.** Would the union really argue the public has no right to know?

**A.** Don't know.

**Q.** If in negotiations everybody knew there'd be this public discussion about the trade-offs, might that help the board protect revenue for program and class size?

**A.** It might. But we would worry about a strike.

By the way, in small, rural communities the reporters covering the school board do sometimes sit in and report on the negotiating sessions, and the world doesn't come to an end.—*T.K.*

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

Minnesota Journal  
Citizens League  
Suite 500  
708 S. Third St.  
Minneapolis, MN 55415

PERIODICALS  
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# Citizens League Matters

September 21, 1999

News for Citizens League Members

## Welcome

### New and returning members

Ernest and Malka Goodman  
Robert Martin  
Louis Newman  
Todd Otis  
Michael Stutzer  
Mary Tambornino

## CITIZENS LEAGUE

708 South 3rd St. Suite 500  
Minneapolis, MN 55415  
612-338-0791 Fax 612-337-5919  
info@citizensleague.net  
www.citizensleague.net

*The Citizens League promotes the public interest in Minnesota by involving citizens in identifying and framing critical public policy choices, forging recommendations and advocating their adoption.*

The Citizens League is an open membership organization. Suggested dues for membership are \$50 for individuals and \$75 for families. Please call 612-338-0791 for more information about membership.

## Members respond to year-end fund drive

*Thanks to all members who contributed to the League's fiscal year-end drive. Your generosity was a big help in the League's late surge to balance the budget for 1999. Thanks again!*

**Goal for year-end drive:**  
**\$20,000**

**Member contributions:**  
**\$21,045**

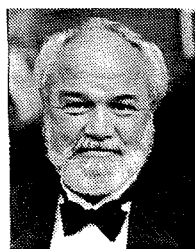
## George Latimer re-elected League president

The Citizens League Board of Directors elected **George Latimer** as president at its transitional meeting on August 31, 1999.

In addition to electing Latimer as president, the Board of Directors elected **Matthew Ramadan** as vice president, **Gary Cunningham** as treasurer and **Christine Roberts** as secretary. The officers will be joined on the Executive Committee by two at-large members, **Marcia Avner** and **Steve Keefe**.

The Board also appointed 13 additional directors to one year terms. They are: **Scott Brener**, US West; **Bill Diaz**, Humphrey Institute; **Laurel Feddema**, US Bancorp; **Peter Gove**, St. Jude Medical, Inc.; **John Gunyou**, Onvoy Net; **Katherine Hadley**, MN Housing Finance Agency; **Bill Johnstone**, Dorsey & Whitney; **Pam Neary**; **John Pacheco**, NSP; **Felix Ricco**, Cargill, Inc; **Kathryn Roberts**, Minneapolis Foundation; **Laura Sether**, MN Planning and the Active Citizenship School for Young Adults and **Missy Thompson**, Thompson Associates. Seven of the 13, Gunyou, Hadley, Pacheco, Ricco, Roberts, Sether and Thompson are new to the League Board.

Missy Thompson is the daughter of current Board member **Emily Anne Tuttle** making them the first mother-daughter Board duo in League history.



**George Latimer**

George Latimer also made League history as he becomes the first president to serve consecutive terms; and he joins Jim Pratt (1964-65 and 1980-81) and John Windhorst (1957-58 and 1967-68) as the only League presidents to serve two terms.

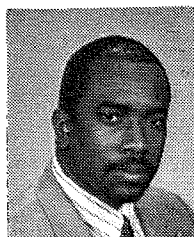
George Latimer is Distinguished Visiting Professor of Urban Studies at Macalester College. Since leaving the St. Paul mayor's office in 1990, he served as an assistant to Henry Cisneros at HUD, as Dean of Hamline University Law School and as CEO of

the National Equity Fund which finances affordable housing for working people.

Latimer's election comes as a result of a Governance Task Force which was appointed by the League Board in 1997. The task force considered both the length of the Board president's term and the size of the Board. They chose not to recommend changes in the size of the Board.

But the task force did recommend that as a matter of practice, the League president should serve two consecutive terms. The task force was chaired by **Mike Christenson** and included **Judy Alnes**, **Terry Hoffman**, **Chuck Neerland**, **Wayne Popham**, **Matthew Ramadan** and **Carol Thacher**.

The Board approved the recommendation during Mary Anderson's term as president with the understanding that it would take effect in 1999.



**Matthew Ramadan**



**Gary Cunningham**



**Christine Roberts**

## MIND-OPENER POLICY FORUMS

### One House or Two?

If Governor Ventura gets his way, Minnesotans might well start the next century with a dramatic change in state government: the elimination of one house of the state legislature.

Once a topic of interest only to political scientists and historians, unicameralism is likely to be a central issue in the next legislative session.

A change in state government on this scale raises a number of philosophical and procedural questions. Do our present circumstances demand such a radical change in state government? On the other hand, are there any compelling reasons to stay with our current system? Why should we keep operating under a structure that was created in a different time under different circumstances?

At our next Mind Opener series, Sen. Reichgott Junge will make the case for a unicameral legislature and Rep. Rukavina will present the other side.

**Tuesday, October 5**

#### **Senator Ember Reichgott Junge**

*Assistant Majority Leader  
(DFL-New Hope)*

**Tuesday, October 12**

#### **Representative Tom Rukavina**

*(DFL-Virginia)*

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#### **Current series**

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#### **Cities and Schools**

**Tuesday, September 21**

**Norm Coleman**  
*Mayor, City of St. Paul*

**Thursday, September 23**

**Patricia Harvey**  
*Superintendent, St. Paul Public Schools*

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

## Board selects next study topic

The annual transitional meeting of the League Board is generally a rather social occasion. This year, however, the Board did some very serious work as it selected the topic for the next League study committee.

Program Selection Committee Chair **John Adams** told the Board that picking study topics is one of their most important tasks. Adams explained the process the committee used to select three potential topics for the Board to consider. He also reviewed the League's criteria for study committees and current issue portfolio.

The three topics recommended by the program committee were: "K-12 finance," "remaking state and local revenue systems" and "electronic training and education."

The Board decided that the taxation topic was consistent with the League's niche and that the League would be able to make a meaningful contribution to policy decisions on the subject. After some discussion about a specific focus, the board agreed that the study should look at making business taxation reflect new economic realities.

Members of the Program Selection committee included: **John Adams**, chair, **Marcia Avner**, **Gary Cunningham**, **Jim Dorsey**, **Sally Evert**, **Susan Heegaard**, **Steve Keefe**, **Sean Kershaw**, **Randy Peterson** and **Orlan Thorbeck**.

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## Thanks to retiring Board members

As there are new Board members to welcome at each year's transitional Board meeting, so too must there be Board members whose terms expire. This year's group of retiring Board members was particularly active. They include: former president **Mary Anderson**, who has served for the League limit of six consecutive years, **Randy Peterson** also six years, **Jim Dorsey** (five years), **Marie Grimm** (four years), **Linda Ewen** (three years), **Sean Kershaw** (three years) and **Orlan Thorbeck** (two years).

*Thank you for your service to the League and the community!*

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## Have an idea for a Mind-Opener series?

*Call us at 612-338-0791 or email us at [info@citizensleague.net](mailto:info@citizensleague.net)*

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## Congratulations!

to Citizens League executive secretary Trudy Koroschetz who reached her fifth year anniversary at the League on September 1. And to research secretary Gayle Ruth who is a grandmother for the first time. Next time you call the League office make sure to congratulate both.