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Citizens League Urges Action to Prepare Minnesota for the New Economy

In a plan released today, the Citizens League outlined a set of priority actions for policy-makers to secure Minnesota's place in the global economy.

"Although Minnesota's economy is doing well now, we are not as well prepared for the future as we should be," said League President George Latimer. **"Is the sky falling? No. But there are some serious blinking lights on the state's economic dashboard that we need to watch."**

These "blinking lights" include evidence of slow growth in new business activity, particularly in high-technology fields, and a long-term shortage of workers across the board. The League recommends bold action to reorient economic development activities to address these issues and prepare for the future. The League's plan calls on policy-makers to set a clear state economic strategy, create a public-private coalition to expand research at the University of Minnesota, and invest more in workforce training.

The statement draws on a number of Citizens League studies, including *Compete Globally, Thrive Locally* (1996), *A Competitive Place in the Quality Race: Putting the University of Minnesota in the Nation's Top Five Public Research Universities* (1998), *Help Wanted: More Opportunities Than People* (1998), and *From Jobs for Workers to Workers for Jobs* (1999).

"For most of the last five years, the Citizens League has been discussing the steps our state needs to take to prepare Minnesota for the new economy without leaving anybody behind," commented League Executive Director Lyle Wray. **"Today's statement pulls together many of the ideas we have raised into a set of clear suggestions for the Governor and Legislature to consider when work begins this summer on the 2001 budget."**

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Longtime League member Roger Hale will lead efforts to implement the action steps outlined in the agenda. Hale, who chaired the League's 1999 study on workforce training, is retired CEO of the Tennant Company. He is also chair of the Governor's Workforce Development Council.

"As anyone with a background in business will tell you, the toughest time to change is when things are going well," noted Hale. "At the same time, that is often exactly when change is needed the most in order to thrive down the road."

The full statement is available on the web at www.citizensleague.net. Copies can also be obtained from the League:

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