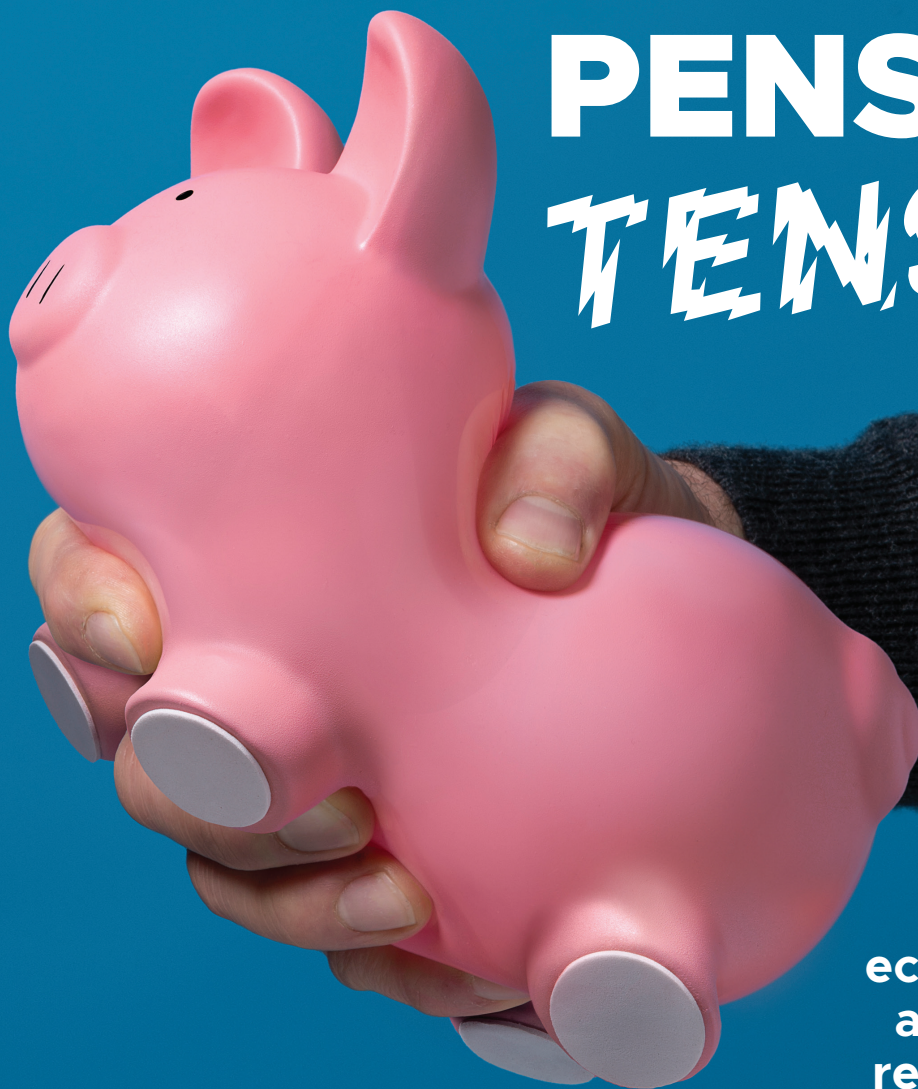




Quality conversation. Healthy debate.

# PENSION TENSION



**Public workers,  
economic anxieties,  
and the quest for  
retirement security**

## Listen to This

Shared experience leads to lasting solutions

In 2004, a middle-aged single mom (we'll call her Joan) began work at a company that provided cleaning services to a large retailer in St. Paul. Her hourly wage for cleaning windows, sweeping floors, and performing other janitorial work was \$7.25, with no benefits or overtime. Today, after working 14 years at the same company, she still has no benefits or overtime, works five hours a day, seven days a week, and makes \$10.75 an hour (about \$1.10 above the current minimum wage).

Joan still likes her job, in part because she can walk to work, but she does not believe her employer will raise her hourly wage to \$15 unless its mandated by the city. According to the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development's online Cost of Living Tool, a single adult with two children would need to make \$41.79 an hour to cover the cost of living in Ramsey County.

A few days after I talked to Joan, over 70 restaurant servers, who had gathered at a local pub for a listening session, made it clear that they did not want to see an hourly pay increase. Unlike Joan, they are tipped regularly and well. When those gratuities get added to their take-home pay, some make upward of \$30 an hour. Their argument is that an increase in the minimum wage would sharply increase labor costs for restaurant owners and,

without a tip credit or inclusion of tips, could lead to job cuts.

Why do these stories matter? They matter because—while data is essential to understanding the depth and breadth of an issue—for policymakers to make responsible decisions about what's best for our communities, they need to understand the experiences and concerns of the people behind the statistics. In other words, every percentage point has a tale to tell.



**These stories matter because every percentage point has an important, informative tale to tell.**

Recently, the Citizens League agreed to help the City of St. Paul explore issues around a possible minimum wage increase. To help inform the process, our staff interviewed St. Paul employees like Joan. We also spoke with employers at companies of varying sizes, such as a small home health care business that would struggle to pay higher wages, especially since its Medicaid reimbursement rates are unlikely to change. And we talked to community members who are still on the fence, in search of answers to a variety of questions.

Is \$15, which is the same wage leaders in Minneapolis are hoping to reach by 2022, the right rate for St. Paul? Would the city benefit, given that not all workers are residents or will remain residents? Would



PHOTO: NANCY MUSINGUZI

a higher paycheck give an unacceptable number of people too much money to qualify for public assistance but not enough to live without it?

We learn how and what to ask by surveying a multiplicity of voices and then listening. Eventually, we hope to edify city leaders, legislators, and the wider public. Our community engagement paradigm infuses all our work, whether it is an initiative aimed at aging adults, such as Calling Home ([www.callinghome.org](http://www.callinghome.org)), or a program designed to train a new generation of leaders, such as Capitol Pathways (see "A Representative Experience," p. 22). The magazine you hold in your hand is no exception.

We launched *Citizens League Voice* to introduce our members to one another through the lens of their accomplishments, challenges, and concerns. We're also hoping to encourage civil, informed dialogue about issues and ideas that impact Minnesotans who live in communities ranging from Northfield to Big Falls, St. Paul to Moorhead. And to make that happen, we need to hear your feedback, your opinions, and your stories.

So send us an email, comment on our Facebook page, or write us a letter. We want to know what moves you, what you want to learn more about, and where you'd like the state to go in the coming years. Get in touch. Get involved. Let's work together. ✨

Email: [editor@citizensleague.org](mailto:editor@citizensleague.org)

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Include name, address, daytime phone, and email. Correspondence may be edited for length and clarity.

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A GOOD DEBATE

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### OUR MISSION

*Citizens League Voice* stimulates quality conversation and meaningful debate by engaging Minnesotans of all backgrounds and ideologies with non-sensational journalism and fact-driven essays designed to explore the most effective policy solutions for today and tomorrow.

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PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS (COVER AND "A GOOD DEBATE"):  
JOHN KUCZALA

# Faces in Our Crowd

Citizens League members remember what drew them to the organization and share why they stay engaged

BY JON SPAYDE

One of the primary purposes of *Citizens League Voice*, both in print and online, is to help members of our community get to know one another's unique stories and points of view. To get things started, we thought it would be fun to share some of what we heard last spring when

we asked members what had moved them to join. Here's hoping you enjoy the results. Keep an eye out for correspondence from our team and get in touch to tell us what's on your mind ([editor@citizensleague.org](mailto:editor@citizensleague.org)). This is, after all, your League and your *Voice*. —The Editors

## Mind Opening

Jess Anna Glover



Jess Anna Glover, an attorney with Education Minnesota, joined the Citizens League out of a mild sense of guilt: "I realized that I had been attending [Citizens League events] and reading League publications ever since I'd first been aware of the organization as a Humphrey Institute Policy Fellow. I figured it was time I joined—and that was quite recently."

Glover finds that Mind Opener breakfasts can be a source of what she calls "insider information." At a presentation by League board

chair Cyndi Leshner, a member of the Super Bowl Host Committee Advisory Board, Glover and her fellow attendees got a chance to ask a lot of questions that transcended the usual headlines: What will be the event's economic and infrastructure legacy? What are the costs? What's it all for?

"I'm a much better lawyer and advocate, and much better at policy, if I'm hearing from people outside my sphere."

Glover even ended up guest speaking at Mind Opener last year, presenting legal context and sharing teachers' perspectives on a bill (later passed) to remove seniority-based LIFO ("last in, first out") as a default way to execute mandated hirings and firings.

"One of the things I miss most about the Humphrey program," she concludes, "is that ability to sit down, hear diverse opinions, and learn. In our work, we get knee-deep in what our organization is doing. But I'm a much better lawyer and advocate, and much better at policy, if I'm hearing from people outside my sphere."

## Community Conversion

Janna Caywood

Janna Caywood calls her first experiences with the League "mind-blowing." A sociology student and social-work program coordinator at Augsburg College in the early aughts, she had believed "that the only way to have an effect on policy was to become a policy professional." Accordingly, she took courses at the U of M on international development and policy analysis. At the same time, she also found herself eyeing the League.

"At first," she says, "I was simply interested in learning how nonprofits work, so I volunteered as an intern." But then, in 2008, she was invited to become a member and join a study committee on water policy. That's when, she says, her life changed. Not only did she learn about a complex resource issue, she was converted to citizen

activism over expert exclusivity. "The League says that everybody has a role to play in working toward the common good," she points out. "You may be an expert in some watershed issue, but you're also a citizen in a democracy. That's what makes the table we all sit at an even table—we're all sitting there as citizens."

Caywood began organizing her neighbors in St. Paul's Como neighborhood for "curb cleaning"—sweeping fallen leaves from the street in front of their houses, reducing the risk that algae-friendly phosphorous and nitrogen would taint runoff water that flows into Como Lake. Today the Como Active Citizen Network fosters study, discussion, and action on a host of neighborhood issues.



## Constructive Conversations

### Luke Hellier



"When I was a junior at Saint John's," Luke Hellier remembers, "they were kicking off the McCarthy Center for Public Policy. They replicated some Citizens League things—they had their own

version of Policy and a Pint, and they invited people with different viewpoints to discuss the issues of the day. After I graduated 12 years ago, I got interested in how that model worked in the 'real world.'"

Today Hellier is an executive at Public Affairs Company, which provides political PR in Minnesota and South Dakota, and an advisor to two Republican officeholders, state representative Roz Peterson of Lakeville and Dakota County commissioner Mary Liz Holberg. He's a Lakeville City Council member too. In short, he has a front-row view of our current political struggles and standoffs.

"At some point in the last few years," he says, "it began to get really hard for people of different political stripes to have meaningful conversations. But the League has a stellar reputation for furthering these kinds of difficult conversations—as well as a lot of credibility because of what's resulted from these conversations. I think this credibility helps create dialogue that you might not find in other organizations."

## Nonpartisan Accessibility

### Lee Anderson



For Lee Anderson, director of Issues Management and State Government Relations at General Mills, the League's "rigorous nonpartisanship" is one key to its success; another

is its penchant for making public policy both accessible and understandable to as many people as possible.

"When you have Republican governors and Democratic mayors equally calling on the Citizens League to tackle tough public-policy issues, as Governor Pawlenty did with education and St. Paul mayor Chris Coleman did with local taxation, that shows the power of inclusion," he says.

And fostering that sort of inclusion, he ex-

plains, also requires accessibility. "Programs like Policy and a Pint get people together in fun environments and let them bring friends and make new ones, all while sharing knowledge on tough policy issues. Public policy can be hard and complicated, and the Citizens League excels at bringing it down to an accessible level for everybody."

Anderson has been a League member for 20 years. He was on the board for six years (2003–09) and chaired it in 2009. Throughout his involvement he's found a good deal to admire in the League's concrete accomplishments, but what he calls "transparency in transportation" stands out.

"Our work in the 2000s helped secure important federal funding that expanded the transit network in Minneapolis," he says, "and enabled some of the most important developments there in years."

## Real Talk

### Jeff Peterson



"I like how the League gets people away from cell phones and into real conversations," says Jeff Peterson.

The former head of government relations at Ecolab also

appreciates how the League has changed since he first signed up in the late '70s. He was especially engaged by, and impressed with, the work the organization did to create the Met Council. "But [at the time], it was kind of a top-down group, mainly old white guys." Peterson let his membership lapse until 12 years ago, when he found the Citizens League "a lot more inclusive."

Along with being drawn to the League's demographic range, Peterson believes that the need for a nonpartisan organization is greater than ever. "The slogan 'common ground, common good' couldn't be more meaningful in today's environment," he says. "In the working groups and hearings, all sides are heard from. People are encouraged not just to come to the meetings, but to take part, to join committees, to dialogue. Face-to-face conversations can be complex, but they're what we need a lot more of."

Saint Paul-based writer **JON SPAYDE** has profiled artists, cultural thought leaders, spiritual teachers, psychologists, and others for a variety of magazines, including *Utne Reader*, *Experience Life*, *Public Art Review*, and *ID*.

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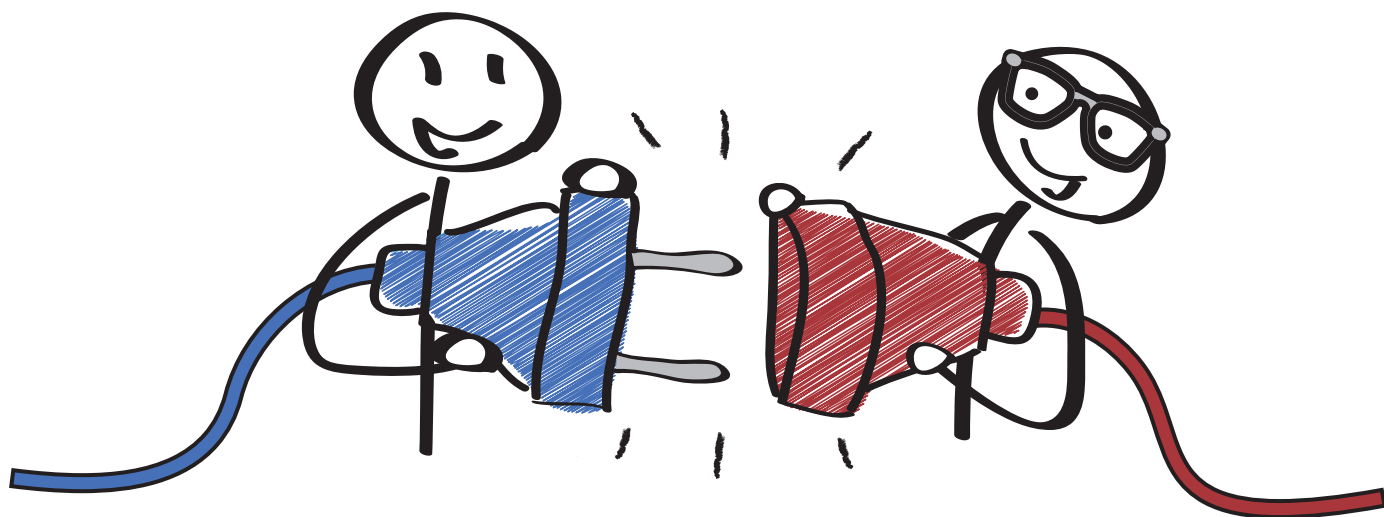
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## Connections Made, Expectations Transformed

At ManyOne, legislators leave political labels at the door and explore essential issues

BY MO PERRY

In an ideal world, a legislator's job would entail a healthy balance of learning and advocacy, with the understanding that you can't create or champion effective solutions before understanding an issue from all angles. Too often, though, there's little opportunity for policymakers to shed the predetermined strictures of their political affiliations long enough to approach an issue with a "beginner's mind." Studio/E's ManyOne program for Minnesota state legislators is an effort to help interested lawmakers break this habit.

Nate Garvis and Tom Wiese cofounded Studio/E in 2012 with a vision of creating an experiential learning community that would help creatives, Fortune 100 executives, entrepreneurs, artists, authors, activists, faith-based leaders, small-business owners, and nonprofit leaders navigate and activate big ideas. The program is dedicated to the idea of exploratory leadership, a concept that emphasizes the value of what they call "extreme diversity"—economic, social, philosophical, and circumstantial. "If you want to learn and grow, you have to hang out with people who are different than you," Garvis says. "It's a requirement for growth."

Shortly after his organization's launch, Garvis started talking with his friend

“If you want to learn and grow, you have to hang out with people who are different than you. It's a requirement for growth.”

Dean Phillips, head of the Phillips Family Foundation, about the growing need for legislators in particular to have a space to think and act outside the limiting framework of their partisan identity. "We talked about how legislators [of different parties] too often get punished for reaching out, collaborating, or getting to know each other," says Garvis.

The two concluded that it would be powerful to invite bipartisan pairs of legislators to participate in Studio/E, giving them a safe space to get to know each other on a first-name basis in an environment where their party labels were less important than their creativity, resourcefulness, and ability to make new connections, both personal and intellectual.

The Phillips Family Foundation began sponsoring two legislators from opposite sides of the aisle to join each new 24-member Studio/E cohort, at a membership rate of \$6,750 per person. (Two new cohorts launch each quarter and meet four times over the course of a

year.) The first few legislators who completed the program were so enthusiastic about it, they approached Phillips and Garvis with a request to come up with a common brand for the politicians who participate.

"They came to us and said, 'There's something bigger here,'" Garvis says. "It's different than the Purple Caucus [a bipartisan caucus launched in 2013]. It's not just for moderates. It's a *post-political* culture among legislators." At a lunch meeting to discuss a possible name for the sponsorship program, Phillips pulled out a dollar bill and pointed to the phrase *E pluribus unum*, Latin for "Out of many, one." Thus the program was christened ManyOne. It has now ushered more than 20 state legislators through Studio/E's curriculum of exploratory leadership.

**All who participate** in Studio/E are asked to arrive with a "big idea" they'd like to work on—whether a brand-new notion or a concept they've been grappling with—that will ultimately be filtered

through the program's curriculum of entrepreneurial and design thinking. ManyOne participants aren't required to use a specific piece of legislation as their big idea, though some have done so with great success. Former state senator Terri Bonoff, one of the first ManyOne participants, used her time in the program to develop what eventually became the Minnesota PIPELINE Project, established by a bipartisan piece of legislation passed in 2014 to expand dual training-and-apprenticeship programs.

The relationships and connections that emerge from the ManyOne program have also influenced Minnesota state politics in more subtle ways. Brian McClung, former deputy chief of staff for Governor Tim Pawlenty, and Marcia Zimmerman, senior rabbi at Temple Israel, were in the same Studio/E cohort and became friends despite their decidedly different political leanings. In 2013, McClung was toying with the idea of authoring an op-ed urging the Minnesota GOP to support a bill allowing same-sex marriage, but he knew it was a risky stance to take and could alienate him from his fellow Republicans.

Knowing that Rabbi Zimmerman had extensive experience communicating strong opinions in her weekly sermons, McClung consulted with her and drew on her expertise and encouragement to finish a piece for the *Star Tribune*. The Freedom to Marry bill passed the Minnesota Legislature in 2013 by a single vote. Former state senator Branden Petersen, the lone GOP state senator to vote in favor of it, later became a Studio/E member himself and told Nate Garvis that McClung's op-ed had influenced his decision to vote the way he did.

"I'm not sure [McClung] would have written that op-ed without the safe community Studio/E provided to think and act [in a new way]," says Garvis. "He and [Rabbi Zimmerman] had met first-name-first, not label-first, and their bond of trust and friendship let him share something anxiety-producing."

McClung's consulting firm MZA + Co has since taken an active role in facilitating the ManyOne program, helping to identify and recruit legislators who would be a good fit. "A big part of the value for elected officials is getting them out of their traditional setting, the state capitol, where they have to line up with their team, and putting them in a setting with entrepreneurs, people from education, retail, healthcare, and more," says McClung.

"We're not trying to move all these people to the mushy middle. You don't have to be a moderate or have your thinking approach the other side's thinking. You don't have to abandon your principles; you can just set aside the labels and look for good ideas that work."

In 2016 MZA + Co, the Citizens League, and Studio/E worked together to produce the first ManyOne Learning Lab, a forum designed to illuminate a public challenge and explore possibili-

ties without immediately leaping into policy positions.

Although Studio/E's ManyOne program is a yearlong project consisting of quarterly daylong, members-only meetings, the Learning Labs are shorter one-time events open to a wide range of stakeholders on a given issue, not just Studio/E members.

The first ManyOne Learning Lab (the "beta" in Studio/E's terminology) was held in November 2016 at Studio/E's "clubhouse," an intimate and welcoming space on Harmon Place in downtown Minneapolis. It revolved around the topic of criminal justice reform and featured a panel consisting of Washington county attorney Pete Orput, Studio/E ManyOne member and state representative Nick Zerwas (R-Elk River), state senator Ron Latz (D-St. Louis Park), Minneapolis police chief Medaria Arradondo, and St. Paul city attorney Sammy Clark and was moderated by Sarah Walker, founder of the Second Chance Coalition and member of Studio/E.

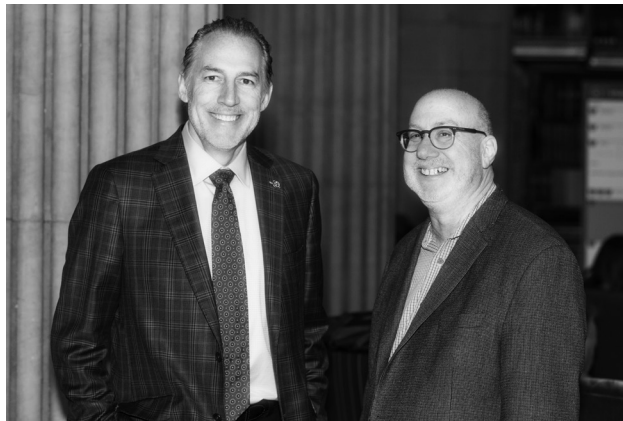
"[When I present about criminal justice reform], usually it's all defense attorneys or prosecutors or Second Chance Coalition supporters," says Senator Latz, who participated on the panel. "Here you had a range, so you could have a back-and-forth with an audience of people in a position to do something about it down the road. In the legislature, we have committee hearings but not a lot of opportunities to have wide-ranging discussion on policy topics. The forum was a good opportunity for that."

In one sign of the event's success, a post-discussion happy hour that was scheduled to last an hour

ended up running almost twice as long, as attendees exchanged business cards and engaged in conversation. MZA + Co, the Citizens League, and Studio/E intend to hold future ManyOne Learning Labs on a quarterly basis; the events will continue to focus on problem areas that lend themselves to bipartisan back-and-forth, including renewable energy, education reform, opioid abuse, and transit and transportation.

Representative Dario Anselmo (R-49A) was in the audience of the November Learning Lab and enjoyed it so much that he signed on to be a 2018 ManyOne participant. His Democratic counterpart in the Studio/E cohort that kicked off in February is Representative Frank Hornstein (DFL-61A). Anselmo plans to use his time in the program to explore ways of improving Minneapolis city schools. "I grew up in a large blended family," says Anselmo. "I was trained by that, so I think I'm a natural fit for what they're doing: How do we find the 70 percent of things that make us the same and work together to make the community better?"

**MO PERRY** is a freelance writer and cofounder of Logosphere Storysmiths, a writing and editing agency. She was named a 2017 Young Entrepreneur by *Minnesota Business Magazine*, and her writing has appeared in publications including the *Atlantic*, *Experience Life*, and *Minnesota Monthly*.



(Left to Right): ManyOne participants, state representatives Dario Anselmo (R-49A) and Frank Hornstein (DFL-61A)

By David Schimke

## Game Up

Want to improve public discourse? Be a good sport.

**A**uthor Amy Chua, best known for *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*, has once again managed to tap into an emerging national conversation.

“At different times in the past,” the Yale law professor writes in her fifth book, *Political Tribes: Group Instinct and the Fate of Nations*, “both the American Left and the American Right have stood for group-transcending values. Neither does today.”

“The Left believes that right-wing tribalism—bigotry, racism—is tearing the country apart. The Right believes that left-wing tribalism—identity politics, political correctness—is tearing the country apart. They are both right.”

Well before the 2016 presidential election, writers with a variety of ideological allegiances, including the *National Review*’s Ben Shapiro and the *Atlantic*’s James Fallows, began mourning the deep division and increasing insularity that has made it nearly impossible to proactively address social, environmental, and economic concerns. And, like Chua, they dependably betray their biases in the process of unpacking the problem. Fallows’s ilk blames Trumpism. Shapiro’s readership blames Obama. Chua, a slightly left-of-center provocateur, ultimately concentrates on the emergence of “identity politics” among cosmopolitan “elites.”

This tendency to simultaneously bemoan the rise of domestic factionalism and rush to lay the blame on a particular side is both ironic and dubious. It’s also typical. Columnists and commentators have constituencies that can sometimes be gently challenged, but given today’s fractured media environment—which is either a symptom or cause of our circumstance, depending on one’s point of view—it’s rare to find a pundit willing to hold a mirror up to their devotees.

As it turns out, various iterations



**Too many of us have allowed loyalty to a party or a personality to become more important than democracy itself, which was not designed to be a zero sum game.**

of the word *tribal* is itself proving divisive. After Fallows used the term in an essay posted last October, readers wrote to complain that it was (as best) inaccurate and (at worst) insensitive. Some members of indigenous communities contended the word evokes cultural stereotypes. Other readers suggested alternative words and phrases such as *herd mentality*, *groupthink*, *clannish*, or even *identitarian* might be more descriptive or useful.

Semantics aside, there’s clearly an emerging consensus that the phenomenon Chua and others are exploring is at the nation’s front door and threatening to blow the house (and senate, and presidency, and civic institutions) down. It would be useful to find a way to discuss the situation in a fashion that demands a bit more self-reflection and common cause. Or, more simply put, we need to take a breath and de-politicize our predicament.

In that spirit, consider one of the few things that have managed to help millions of people of different races, religions, and social persuasions survive an untold number of awkward silences and unavoidable, potentially incendiary work parties, weddings, and holidays with the in-laws.

Sports talk.

### **Fandom is foreign to many.**

For others, though, it’s a precious, precarious thing.

At its best, deep affinity for a team can build community, bind family, and foster healthy allegiance to a city,

state, or educational institution. It can be exhilarating or exhausting, beautiful or grotesque, earthbound or otherworldly. Best of all, it allows for intense passion that alternately exhibits itself in fleeting bouts of unfettered joy and bittersweet heartbreak.

Often, it’s also inherited. Fathers and daughters, mothers and sons, brothers and sisters grow up cheering for the Vikings or Bears, Hawkeyes or Badgers. Team colors get in the blood and rouse spirited loyalty. It’s possible to break these ties, of course, but it rarely comes easy.

This sort of affinity can and too often does morph into blind allegiance and irrational zealotry. Which is one reason many people avoid balls and bats in favor of other pursuits. Since the 1800s, the specter of hooliganism has loomed over the sport of soccer. Street riots routinely mar significant sports victories. And fan-on-fan violence can ignite with or without the aid of alcohol. In these unfortunate cases, people’s self-esteem and self-worth are so closely aligned with a team that they lose sight of the sport itself. Respect for something greater, if it ever existed, is replaced by self-destructive, self-serving delusions of grandeur or victimhood or both.

In the last decade, our politics have begun to resemble this brand of unhinged fandom. Too many of us have allowed loyalty to a party or a personality to become more important than democracy itself, which was not designed



to be a zero sum game, but a collective competition for the best way forward.

If our favorite player is called for a foul, the referees must be fixed. If our chosen candidate is accused of sexual misconduct, the accuser must have an ulterior motive. If our favorite collegiate team bent a few rules on the way to a conference championship, no big deal. If *their* team is caught with their hand in the till, tear down their banners. If *their* president sanctioned extralegal activity, show them no mercy. If ours does the same, look the other way.

When it's all done, no one wins and the field of play is rendered unrecognizable. We assume the worst of our foes: They must be corrupt or morally deficient. Un-American. Unpatriotic. Unfeeling. Unintelligent. Irredeemable.

Comparing politics to sports isn't wholly satisfying. The similarities are well trodden and the differences in overall importance, vast. But as an exercise in understanding the nature of our nation's discontent it seems as good a starting place as any—if only because it's easier to see the absurdity of groupthink and faceless factionalism when it's distinguished by a team logo, as opposed to a nation's

flag or some other sectarian slogan.

Fandom also seems a flimsier conceit, destructive when people begin to take their fight songs literally, but somehow less daunting and unbeatable. Maybe that's because the word tribal dates back centuries, and, fairly or not, connotes a violent permanence. Or maybe, as anthropologist Lawrence Rosen argues, the fact that a growing number of commentators mistakenly view "tribes as primitive, violent, and insular is already having pernicious effects on our response to this new era of politics."

"Tribes are our common human heritage. But that doesn't mean they are some sort of primal, inescapable curse," he writes in the January 16 issue of *Foreign Policy*, which Chua might want to peruse before her next book reading. "Tribalism is a social resource that human beings ought to, and do, make use of depending on the circumstances we face.

"Years of empirical studies of actual tribes show that even as they are defined by relatively narrow identities, they are also characterized by porous boundaries . . . As tribesmen may have learned through long experience, it is only by reaching across boundary lines that one

may reconstruct a world that seems whole."

Throughout history the incremental struggle for a more positive, productive politics has been marked by personal courage and demanded that individuals resist the allure of acquiescence. Since the last election, a growing number of people have proudly hardened their positions and blithely dismiss compromise and calm conversation as signs of weakness or a naive waste of breath. This is no more rational or productive than burning another team's jersey.

It takes courage and imagination to consider another person's—or, yes, even an entire political party's—point of view. And, no, really listening and assuming another's best intentions will not have us singing "Kumbaya" by the midterms. It might just catch on, though, and remind a few more people that sometimes great rivals can bring out the best in one another, shake hands when the whistle blows, and look forward to playing another day.

Twin Cities based writer, editor, and media strategist **DAVID SCHIMKE** is the founding editor of *Citizens League Voice*.



# PENSION *TENSION*

Public workers, economic anxieties, and the quest for retirement security

BY BRIANA BIRSCHBACH

## IN RECENT YEARS,

the debate over public pensions—usually reserved for the most inside of bureaucratic insiders—has seeped into the broader political conversation.

In large part, this is because of growing alarm over a budding pension crisis across the country. States like New Jersey and Illinois, for example, are facing more than \$100 billion in unfunded liabilities with their pension plans, which provide retirement benefits for teachers, police officers, firefighters, and other state and local government employees.

Though the situation in Minnesota is not as grim, the state is on the hook for public pension plans designed to cover a half million workers, which—based on incongruity between current market trends and growth assumptions built into the plans—are on track to be underfunded by nearly \$14 billion over the next several decades. That figure is making an increasing number of people uncomfortable and Republican and Democratic legislators, with different ideas on how to address the issues, are interested in passing a bill this session to reduce these obligations, while still honoring the promises made to employees when they signed up to work in the public sector.

Unfortunately for the uninitiated, the pension tension that has bubbled up to the mainstream media and plays out in sometimes contentious committee meetings at the state capitol is dense with acronyms and riddled with economic formulas. The following primer is meant to help decode those discussions and give readers a better feel for the core issues being debated.

### How are pensions different from my 401(k)?

Pensions are a benefit most commonly offered in the public sector, and they're considerably different from the retirement benefits most private-sector workers receive. As a "defined benefit" plan, a pension is a promise from an employer that an employee will receive a certain amount of monthly income after retirement. In contrast, most private-sector plans, such as 401(k)s, are defined contribution plans, which allow employees to choose how much they invest—with no guarantee on future income. In short:

Pensions put the investment risk on the plan provider—in the case of public employee plans, the government.

### So everybody who has any sort of government job is in the same pension plan in Minnesota?

It's not that simple, and there are a lot of acronyms involved, so bear with us. The Minnesota State Retirement System, or MSRS, covers state employees, while the Public Employees Retirement

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Public pensions  
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and an agreement  
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paying them.

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Association, or PERA, covers local government employees. Neither of those includes teachers, however, who are covered under a third plan, the Teachers Retirement Association (TRA). Well, all teachers in Minnesota except those who work for Saint Paul Public Schools, who are part of the St. Paul Teachers' Retirement Fund Association (SPTREA).

### How is the pension calculated?

Generally, after three to five years of employment, teachers and government workers are eligible for a pension. An

employee's pension is determined by multiplying the number of years they've worked in state or local government by their average salary over their five highest-earning years by a so-called "multiplier." Currently, the multiplier is 1.7 percent for most government employees and 1.9 percent for most teachers.

So if a public elementary-school teacher worked for 25 years and made an average of \$61,000 during her highest-paid years, the state would pay them about \$29,000 per year after retirement for their pension ( $25 \times \$61,000 \times 0.019$ ). Those benefits kick in at age 65 or 66, depending on what year the employee started, and continue until the person's death.

The funding for pensions is based on professional predictions about how much the government and workers need to pay into the system to cover pensions long into the future. In Minnesota, professionals invest workers' contributions and use those gains to help pay for benefits. But predicting the future is not easy to do. Over the last decade, the assumptions that public pension managers made in other states were overly optimistic.

Complicating things in this state: Minnesotans are living a lot longer than people expected. The average Minnesotan now lives to be about 81.1 years old, the second-highest life expectancy in the nation, after Hawaii. And that number is expected to rise, meaning the state could be paying out pension benefits to some retirees for decades.

### What is a "funded ratio" and why is it so important?

Another term to remember when it comes to pensions is "funded ratio," which is basically a percentage that tells a state if it has enough money to pay for all of the pension benefits it has promised to pay out. A 100 percent funded ratio, for example, would mean the state has the same amount of assets as it does liabilities.

In Minnesota—per a snapshot taken in July 2017 by Minnesota Management and Budget, the state's top finance agency—the MSRS currently sits at an 86 percent funded ratio, PERA is at 79 percent, and TRA is at a 78 percent funded ratio. All told, that amounts to nearly \$14 billion in unfunded liabilities.

# RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

The impetus behind the creation of **A Good Debate** was a recognition that meaningful conversation and respectful, evidence-based discourse is lacking in popular media and the public sphere. Our desire in each issue of *Citizens League Voice* is to model thoughtful dialogue that encourages disagreement and discourages rancor.

Every quarter, those who turn to the cover package will be presented with **Just the Facts**, designed to provide objective context for a specific question or area of disagreement. What follows is a carefully planned and vetted collection of **Opening Arguments**, written by policymakers, academics, and engaged community members representing a wide range of opinion and expertise. Participants work closely with *Voice* editors to hone their positions and are encouraged to rely on logic and best evidence. Personal attacks, red herrings, and assumptions, particularly those that involve cultural or ideological stereotypes, are discouraged. A **Cross-Exam** of each contributor rounds out the section. Conducted by the editors, this is an effort to further explore the nuance of each argument and provide a model for thoughtful questioning.

The goal of A Good Debate is not to *convince* readers of any one position. No one wins or loses. Instead, the hope is that when presented with a variety of in-depth thought on important issues, Citizen League members, lawmakers, and the wider public will be better equipped to sort through the hollow, contrarian rhetoric that too often hijacks productive discussion.

This figure has alarmed people all along the ideological spectrum. Their concern is that looming, unfunded liabilities can hang over a state's credit rating and underscore the long-term financial burden public pensions put on states. Other interested parties, who believe the pension crisis is, at best, exaggerated, note that plans are not all paid out at once, nor will that figure ever have to be paid out in its entirety. They also point out that Minnesota has done better than many other states in keeping its liabilities on the manageable side, especially after a 2010 pension law spread out the burden of unfunded liabilities among retirees, active public workers, and public employers.

## How can pensions change over time?

Pensions may be paid for several decades, and the numbers can change based on a few factors. One is COLA, or a cost-of-living adjustment. Another acronym thrown around in heated debates, it's simply a change in monthly retirement benefits to account for rising prices, meant to protect a retiree's purchasing power no matter how long he or she lives. Most pension plans have some kind of COLA adjustment, and in Minnesota, it varies from plan to plan. When pension debates are on the table, those adjustments often are as well.

The same goes for the assumed rate of return, which is what states have used for decades to determine their ability to meet future pension obligations. Minnesota assumes an 8 percent return on the investments it makes on behalf of public employees, but some think the number should be based on low-risk bonds, which have much more modest expectations—typically around 4 or 5 percent.

Another thing to remember about pension plans: They're a promise from an employer and an agreement based on work already completed, which means it's not easy to back out of paying them. The question of whether it's a moral or legal obligation to pay out pensions has been brought to the courts in several states, and they've tended to rule that the benefits of existing employees are protected under contract law and thus cannot be reduced.

## So who's working on this?

Pension issues are decided by the Legislative Commission on Pensions and Retirement, which is equally divided between the House and Senate and is tasked with addressing problems or making whatever changes to the pension system are needed each year. And like everything else at the capitol, pensions are subject to the whims of state lawmakers.

In 2017, the pension bill got wrapped up in end-of-session politics. In an effort to get Governor Dayton to sign a bill Republican legislators wanted—which, among other things, would have preempted local governments from setting their own minimum wage and labor laws—they attached it to a bill with things Democrats wanted, including wage-theft protections, paid-parental-leave benefits for state workers and, yes, the proposed changes to public-employee pensions. Dayton vetoed the bill.

This year, legislators are preparing a package to start dealing with the low return on current investments and the increased life expectancy of retirees.

All sides say they want to do something on pensions this year, but whether they can get together and pass a proposal remains to be seen. Beyond getting caught up in end-of-session politics in 2017, pension debates also get caught up in disagreements over public unions. The pension benefits for public-school teachers were the subject of much discussion, for instance, but were eventually carved out of the pension bill altogether.

It can also be hard getting state workers on board with reforms to the pension system, since changes can be seen as attacking unions and state workers. In Minnesota, public workers' contributions cover roughly half of pension costs. 🌸

**BRIANA BIRSCHBACH** covers state government politics and policy for *MinnPost*. A University of Minnesota graduate, she was named Young Journalist of the Year by the Minnesota chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists in 2015, and has twice been named among the best state political reporters in America by the *Washington Post*.

*Excerpted, adapted, and updated from a story originally published by MinnPost.*

# OUR PARTICIPANTS

## THE PROBLEM: Understated or Overblown?



**MARK HAVEMAN** is executive director of the Minnesota Center for Fiscal Excellence, an education, research, and advocacy organization promoting sound tax policy and fiscally responsible government.

### THE CONCLUSION:

Minnesota's public pension system is in peril, and legislators and citizens must wake to the severity of the situation.

### THE ARGUMENTS:

- The state's public pensions are between \$16 billion and \$24 billion in the hole.
- Short-term political concerns are preventing pragmatic, long-term solutions.
- Those in favor of the status quo are over-estimating future investment returns.
- Status quo politics are passing on an unprecedented level of risk to future citizens and public employees.

**TYLER BOND** is the program manager at the National Public Pension Coalition, where he supports national and state efforts to protect the retirement security of public employees and advance retirement security for working Americans.



### THE CONCLUSION:

The so-called public pension crisis is overblown, and it obfuscates a looming retirement security crisis for all Americans.

### THE ARGUMENTS:

- Minnesota has provided librarians, sanitation workers, correctional officers, and other public employees retirement security for generations.
- Bouts of economic insecurity impact all investments, but public pension plans can invest on a longer time horizon.
- Long-term investing means public pension plans can, and do, pay benefits while less than 100-percent funded.
- Most workers who have access to a 401(k) through their employer are not saving enough for an adequate retirement.

## THE SOLUTION: Defined Contributions vs. Defined Benefits



**KIM CROCKETT** is vice president, senior policy fellow, and general counsel at Center of the American Experiment, a "Do Tank" that crafts and proposes creative solutions that emphasize free enterprise, limited government, personal responsibility, and government accountability.

### THE CONCLUSION:

To avoid a systemic meltdown, Minnesota should shift all incoming public workers to 401(k)-like retirement plans.

### THE ARGUMENTS:

- Public retirement funds self-report a \$17.2 billion shortfall. It's closer to \$50 billion.
- Recent changes to the public pension system demonstrate good faith but are woefully inadequate.
- The system's bias toward "career" employees is unfair to younger, more mobile modern workers.
- Portable retirement plans are more flexible, realistic, and sustainable.

**KATIE HATT** is executive director of North Star Policy Institute, a think tank dedicated to advancing policies that help working people get ahead in Minnesota.



### THE CONCLUSION:

Defined contributions are too risky and would leave loyal Minnesota workers economically vulnerable.

### THE ARGUMENTS:

- One in every seven Minnesotans age 65 and older lives in poverty while relying only on Social Security.
- For every dollar in public pension benefits, Minnesota taxpayers pay only 14 cents. The rest comes from employees and investments.
- Every dollar Minnesota taxpayers invest in public pensions results in nearly \$10 of statewide economic activity.
- When it comes to retirement security, nothing beats a real pension.

# The Contours of a Crisis BY MARK HAVEMAN

Minnesota must come to grips with the grave state of its public pension system

## COMPLICATED MATH, CONFUSING

terminology, and heavy dependence on assumptions about what the future holds make evaluating the health of Minnesota's public pension system a challenging task. The black box of actuarial practice isn't exactly taxpayer-friendly. But if you study the pension plans' own valuation and financial reports, this is the story that's unfolding:

- We have significant unfunded obligations. As of today, the Minnesota State Board of Investment (SBI) should have \$16 billion more invested in the markets just to pay for the retirement benefits that past and present state and local employees have already earned.

- That \$16 billion is sufficient only if SBI's retirement assets can earn an average of 8 percent or more every year forever. If we can only earn an average of 7 percent every year, that \$16 billion needs to be \$26 billion instead. According to the SBI, the median projected 10-year return of the SBI's current investment policy is 7.3 percent.

- Because an increasing number of baby boomers are retiring and people are living longer on average, pension plans are now paying out about twice as much in benefits as they are taking in from employee and employer contributions. Last year alone, cash-flows out of Minnesota's public-pension funds exceeded inflows by nearly \$2.3 billion. As this trend continues, it becomes more and more difficult to rely on investment performance alone to meet our long-term obligations.

- For the 14th consecutive year, the state has failed to make stakeholders pay the contributions required to support the financial health and sustainability of Minnesota's public pension plans. Those chronic contribution shortfalls are directly responsible for more than \$6.5 billion in unfunded pension liabilities since 2002.

How does a state that prides itself on good government find itself in a situation like this?

The simple answer is that the

expectations and demands of the present always prevail over future needs. Governments like to keep their contributions as low as possible so that precious tax dollars can fund government services. Employees like to keep more of their take-home pay. Retirees understandably want their retirement benefits to keep up with inflation. Those voices, rather than that of the fourth grader in 2028 who can't get the extra help he needs in a class with 35 students, are the ones heard

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How does  
a state  
that prides itself  
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government  
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in a situation  
like this?

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at pension commission hearings.

The more complex answer is that it has been, and remains, far too easy to ignore the true economic cost of these plans. In other words, we do a fantastic job of making public pensions look cheaper than they really are. For example, to determine required contribution levels, pension plans must calculate how much pension-promises cost in today's dollars. But there is no logical connection between what an investment portfolio might earn and the present value of future liabilities; it's a practice that

literally can't be found in any other area of private- or public-sector finance.

Additionally, when pension costs get politically uncomfortable, we push the dates for full funding further out, effectively refinancing the debt to keep our current costs down. Responsible pension practice would set this period to the average length of time the current group of employees will work before they retire from public service—thus preventing the next generation from paying for the current generation's pension costs.

In short, we want to provide these benefits, but we don't want to pay the price. We have avoided that by transferring cost and risk to future citizens and public employees on a scale never before seen in this state.

Legislators have enacted two rounds of pension sustainability repairs over the past 12 years that feature shared sacrifice from all stakeholders, including reductions in retiree benefit increases and phased-in contribution increases from both employees and employers. These fixes didn't prevent the situation we're in now, however, even though the S&P 500 was consistently above Great Recession lows—meaning the shared sacrifices were both absolutely necessary and absolutely insufficient. And there's no sign that this legislative session will yield different results.

The good news is that Minnesota's public pensions are better off than those in many other states, thanks to some sensible pension policy choices we've made over time. And there is still time to pursue reform both within and outside of traditional defined-benefit pension plans that can simultaneously result in a high-quality, secure retirement for public employees, and eliminate long-term risks to taxpayers and government services.

These options will narrow, however, if we keep pretending everything is OK. Minnesota must meet this problem head-on, and do it now. Recognizing the true cost of these plans is an essential first step. ❀

# Panic Attack

BY TYLER BOND

The overheated rhetoric around the future of public pensions obscures fundamental issues

## WHEN THE FINANCIAL CRISIS STRUCK

in 2008, almost all investors lost money. From people saving in their 401(k)s to institutions like public-pension funds, investors lost an average of about 25 percent, according to the Employee Benefit Research Institute. The economic recovery since the recession has been uneven, with years of slow growth and low investment returns followed by years of double-digit returns and a surging stock market.

One consequence of the recession and the uneven recovery is that public-pension funds have maintained lower funding levels in recent years than in years past. This has led to much overheated rhetoric about a nonexistent pension crisis while ignoring the real challenges facing many Americans who struggle to save for retirement.

Public pension plans have existed in the United States for more than 100 years. In Minnesota, the Teachers Retirement Association Fund was established in 1931, and the Minnesota State Retirement System was established in 1929. Cities and states have offered public pensions for so long because they provide a secure and reliable retirement to teachers, firefighters, and other public employees after a career in public service.

Defined-benefit pensions provide a fixed monthly payment for the rest of a retiree's life. Pension plans work by pooling contributions from many workers and their employers into one large fund and then investing that fund for long-term growth and returns. Pension plans can invest on a longer time horizon because new workers are always joining and paying into the fund as older workers are retiring and collecting their pension benefits. This is different from individual workers saving in a 401(k). While people can invest more aggressively when they are younger, as they age they must shift to more conservative, lower-return investments in order to protect against any sudden downturns in the financial markets that could wipe out their savings, as happened to many in 2008. Pension plans, unlike individual investors, have decades to recover

investment losses.

Since public pension plans are focused on long-term investing, it is not necessary for a pension plan to be fully funded all of the time. To say a pension plan is 100 percent funded means that the plan has, at that point in time, all of the money it will ever need to pay full benefits to every active worker, retiree, and other beneficiary of the system. It means that if all active workers suddenly retired and began collecting their benefits immediately, the pension fund could pay all of them. Of course, this is not even close to the way the world works.

Even if every public employee in Minnesota retired this Friday, the pension systems wouldn't have to pay their benefits all at once, which means the pension systems wouldn't have to be fully funded on the universal retirement day. They would still have years to earn investment returns to pay pension benefits. Achieving full funding should be the goal of every public-pension plan because it

demonstrates responsible management and prudent investing. It's worth repeating, however, public-pension plans can, and do, pay benefits while less than 100 percent funded.

The hyperbole that has emerged around unfunded liabilities in public-pension plans obscures a much more serious problem facing society: a looming retirement security crisis. Roughly half of workers in the United States do not have access to a retirement plan through their employer. These workers are saving nothing for retirement, aside from what they are earning through Social Security. Most workers who have access to a 401(k) through their employer are not saving enough for retirement either. Many Americans face the prospect of falling behind their current standard of living in retirement. This is an urgent crisis that requires action by political leaders and policymakers.



*Continued on page 20*

# Back & Forth

## QUESTIONS FOR MARK HAVEMAN

Some argue that because Minnesota is in better shape than states like New Jersey and Illinois [which are much closer to insolvency], it's reasonable to assume that the market will adjust over time to get things back on track.

**MH:** I'm always bothered when people benchmark us against states that are in the intensive care unit. It's like showing up in a doctor's waiting room with a 103 degree fever and being smug that you're not hospitalized yet.

As far as the whole market is concerned: We earned 15.1 percent on investments last year, and the State Board of Investment's average return has been, I think, over 9 percent for over 30 years. And that's terrific. But then the

question you have to ask yourself is how in the world can we be \$16 billion in the hole when we've blown away the average annual expected return for 30 years or more? Something else is going on, and the big one is if a pension plan is significantly underfunded, even fantastic investment returns generate far fewer investment dollars. You are on a hamster wheel trying to get out from under this by simply investing your way out. It doesn't work that way.

Given that everyone doesn't retire at the same time, why does it matter that the state is ever at a 100 percent "funded ratio"? In other words, the \$16 billion shortfall will never come in to play all at once.

**MH:** Of course not everyone is going to retire at the same time, but that is not what we're talking about here. Funded ratios tell us how much money we should have right now to pay for the benefits that have already been earned. The actuaries say we should have X dollars in the bank right now needing to earn 8 percent per year in perpetuity to pay those benefits, and we're X minus \$16 billion dollars right now. People who argue that 100 percent funding doesn't matter are basically saying that over time we're OK with not fully keeping the promises that we've made to public employees.

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*You are on a hamster wheel trying to get out from under this by simply investing your way out. It doesn't work that way.*  
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You write that there's still time to pursue reform both within and outside of traditional defined benefit pension plans. What are some examples of that approach?

**MH:** Well, first of all, there are hybrid systems that contain a piece of the defined benefit combined with some sort of 401(k)-type solution. So, for example, you could create a system where the first X dollars of an employee's salary are eligible for defined benefit and then on top of that you have access to a variable, 401(k)-like option. The advantage? Lower-income or lower-wage public-sector workers get income security by

having most, if not all, of their benefit in the form of a defined benefit, but at the same time we aren't making a taxpayer-backed guarantee of higher-income workers' pre-retirement lifestyles. Wisconsin has been doing this sort of thing for years and has one of the best pension systems in the nation. Cash balance plans, collective defined contribution plans, there are many options to explore.

I think some of your critics would say they're surprised that you'd be open to a hybrid-like compromise.

**MH:** I've always said: If someone could come up with a way to deliver a defined benefit plan that is affordable, responsibly funded, and doesn't expose Minnesota taxpayers and future public services to unacceptable risks and costs, [the Minnesota Center for Fiscal Excellence] would sign on to it. But we are nowhere near that yet. I think certain stakeholders really rally their membership around the idea that the current way of doing things is the only

way to go on providing a secure retirement for their employees. And I've never seen any real warming to or exploration of what I would call true structural reform. And frankly I think this only starts to actually gain traction once the handwriting is on the wall. The states that have sort of embarked on that path are some of the ones that are in the direst of circumstances. It seems to take that type of crisis to prompt action.

## QUESTIONS FOR TYLER BOND

If you were writing your essay for a publication in a state like New Jersey or Illinois [where the public pension funds are much closer to insolvency], would you make a similar set of arguments?

TB: I think my argument would in large part be the same. Public pensions have proven over the decades to be the most secure retirement plan for working families. As with everything in life, though, pension plans don't work if you don't treat them properly. If you don't put money into the system, you can't assume that money is just going to magically appear. The problem that we've seen in states like Illinois is that both political parties have consistently skipped

payments, deferred payments, and done any number of things to avoid paying in what they should. That put them in a hole, so when the recession hit, they were already in a weak position. Minnesota is not in that situation. Minnesota has historically had healthy, well-managed, well-funded pension plans. That's a really important distinction: It's not the design of these plans that is at fault. It's the poor management of the plans by people in various states.

Minnesota is rapidly aging. Given that reality, isn't there a higher risk that the state could reach a tipping point—especially as our pension plans aren't 100 percent funded—at which too many people are retiring and not enough are paying in?

TB: Baby boomers were the largest generational cohort in history, and now they are eclipsed by the millennials. One underreported story of the past decade is that while pension plans have been recovering from the investment losses suffered during the recession, adjustments have been made to the investment-return assumptions and to the mortality tables. That's what actuaries and plan managers do: They look at the data and say we need to tweak this here or we need to tweak this there and make adjustments so funds can stay sustainable for the long term.

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*Minnesota has historically had healthy, well-managed, well-funded pension plans. That's a really important distinction.*  
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In Minnesota, the assumed rate of return on public-pension investments is between 7 and 8 percent. How do you respond to the argument that a 4 percent rate of return would be much more realistic—and responsible?

TB: The important thing to remember when you're talking about investment-return assumptions is that public pensions are long-term investments, oftentimes between 20 and 30 years. Over this longer horizon, the plans often do meet or exceed their assumed rate of return. The other thing to remember—and one that is often ignored by critics—is that pension funds have no end date. When older workers are retiring and collecting their benefits, younger workers are joining and paying into this system. So this allows the pension fund

managers to maintain an optimally balanced investment portfolio. They can balance investments across different assets and achieve consistent long-term returns.

The investment strategy of a pension fund is, in some ways, very different than the investment strategy of an individual saving in their 401(k). An individual stops investing at a certain point, and as they get closer to retirement age, they should shift into more conservative investments. That doesn't need to happen in a collective public pension system.

Would you be open to a hybrid solution that involves a lower defined benefit and a mix of variable investments?

TB: I think any time you talk about moving away from defined-benefit pension plans, that should be concerning for public employees and retirees. Defined-benefit pensions are the most secure and the most reliable retirement plan for public employees. 401(k)-style defined contribution plans have shown over the years

that they provide an inadequate and risky retirement for working people. A lot of people who contribute to 401(k) plans don't contribute enough, and as they get closer to retirement age, they are going to discover that they don't have enough saved and will face a lower standard of living in retirement.

# Own Your Own Future

BY KIM CROCKETT

Only a courageous overhaul can save Minnesota's insolvent, outdated public pension system

## THE DEBATE OVER THE PUBLIC-PENSION

funding crisis has overlooked a key question: Can Minnesota ensure that its public employees will have long-term access to a retirement plan that is both realistic and reliable?

One reason people don't honestly grapple with the topic is because some don't want to hear the answer: That the unfunded liabilities and inadequate design of defined-benefit plans—the standard construct for public employees—demand a shift to the sorts of portable, defined-contribution plans available to employees in the private sector.

No one disagrees that Americans should be putting aside funds for a secure retirement. There's anxiety about our employees' future security, though, because our contributions—thanks in part to a lack of legislative and cultural incentives—are often inadequate and unrealistic, especially given longer lifespans and an expectation of decades of leisure late in life.

Government employees have an even more specific reason to worry: State administered and taxpayer supported pension plans are underfunded. This poses a dilemma for all taxpayers, of course, since every Minnesotan contributes to the system. It's especially daunting for those assuming the funds they've been counting on are solvent.

We are a long way from beginning to address a looming, full-blown crisis. The experts can't even agree on what assumptions to use when analyzing future liabilities. What is a reasonable assumed rate of return on assets? How important is it to be fully funded? These sorts of questions, like the debate itself, are as complex as they are existential. Worse, if the state fails to accurately communicate what's really happening, neither citizens nor lawmakers will be in a position to craft informed solutions.

To varying degrees, Minnesota State Retirement System (MSRS), Public Employees Retirement Association (PERA), Teachers Retirement Association (TRA), and the St. Paul Teachers' Retirement Fund all report stubborn unfunded liabilities. In aggregate, these plans self-report

a \$17.2 billion shortfall. Other experts, using more conservative (and I would argue, realistic) assumptions, say it is \$50 billion or more.

To try and stop the bleeding, there have been modest changes, which have included increasing employee contributions, lowering cost-of-living adjustments, and dipping into Minnesota's general fund. (TRA gets \$34 million a year in cash, for example. The St. Paul Teachers'

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None of the  
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Retirement Fund gets \$11 million and has asked for another \$5 million).

Although TRA has yet to follow suit, in 2017 the other plans lowered the assumed rate of return and discount rate from a high of 8.5 percent to 7.5 percent. This last move brought more honesty to the discussion. But none of these reluctantly adopted changes—like those currently being discussed at the capitol—are enough to root out the real problem.

Although it will be one of the hardest things Minnesotans have ever been asked to do, the only way to stop accruing economically crippling liabilities is to close defined-benefit plans to new entrants and

shift all incoming public employees to defined-contribution plans. If this were done, the unfunded liabilities on the state's books would be paid over time just like any other debt and we could honor our promise to current employees. It would also ensure that employee retirement benefit obligations would be fully funded at the time of service.

While this move is particularly sensible given the state of affairs, it is not a recommendation born solely out of crisis. It would be prudent even if defined-benefit plans were fully funded.

Defined public benefits were designed decades ago to attract and reward people who spent their entire working lives in the public sector. In practice, according to the data analyzed by Center of the American Experiment (where I serve as vice president), this means that people who change jobs before the prescribed retirement age get significantly lower benefits than "career" employees, who—when they add benefits earned over a 25- to 30-year career to standard Social Security payments—receive about 85 percent of their pre-retirement income into perpetuity.

In other words, the value of these pensions is quite low until employees reach their later years of service. This practice is called backloading and is particularly unfair to employees who get fired or laid off, exit the workforce to care for family, have spouses who get transferred, or who just want to do something else for a living. Backloading forces employees who exit "early" to subsidize "career" employee pensions, and leaves them without the full benefit of their own contributions. (In this day and age, how many people stay with any career, let alone one employer, for 30 years?)

There are better options, of course. Minnesota's university employees already enjoy the ability to contribute to individually owned, portable retirement plans for different risk appetites. "This is where the pension world is moving, and

*Continued on page 20*

# No Pensions, No Security

BY KATIE HATT

Abandoning defined benefits is both an over reaction and bad public policy

## REMEMBER THE CHICKEN LITTLE FABLE?

Just like the chicken who believed the world was coming to an end, some politicians and researchers are provoking unreasonable fear about the health of Minnesota's public pension funds.

Teachers and government workers have deferred their wages for a guaranteed pension that allows them to retire with dignity. Yet their retirement security is continually under attack by conservative organizations, whose stated intent is to transition pension plans into defined contribution plans.

## Benefits Are Better Than Contributions.

Today, most public workers in Minnesota have a modest defined benefit pension of some \$21,000 a year, guaranteed no matter what happens in the stock market or how long they live after retirement. In many cases, this money, combined with Social Security, is the difference between dignity and the ravages of poverty.

Not all workers are so fortunate. Nearly a million Minnesotans don't have access to a retirement plan at work. One in every seven Minnesotans age 65 and older lives in poverty while relying only on Social Security. The typical working-age household has only \$3,000 in retirement assets, while near-retirement households have only \$12,000.

Under a defined contribution plan, loyal and essential public workers would lose their guaranteed retirement income. Their savings would be subject to investment risk and their future income would depend on their ability to save. As with a 401(k), most retirees would see their savings run out before they die.

**Pension Envy.** We've seen the playbook on pension envy. Wall Street works to convince young people that pensions are for a bygone generation, pitting them against older workers while pitching the benefits of portable 401(k)s, which seem attractive to those just entering the workforce. What goes unsaid is that when it comes to retirement security, nothing beats a real pension. There's nothing "old school"

about retiring with dignity and defined benefits that last a lifetime.

**Healthy Pensions.** Eliminating defined benefit pensions has become trendy for corporate giants, and now it's becoming fashionable for government. So far, Minnesota has resisted the trend, largely because our system—contrary to the fear mongering headlines—is in good shape.

Minnesota's three public pensions—Minnesota State Retirement System (MSRS), Public Employees Retirement Association (PERA), and Teachers Retirement Association (TRA)—are all well managed and have \$64 billion in assets. Today,

according to Retirement Systems of Minnesota, MSRS is 81.5 percent funded, PERA is 78 percent funded, and TRA is 77.5 percent funded.

Even more important—and what's often overlooked by anti-tax forces—Minnesota taxpayers as a whole pay only 14 cents of every dollar of public pension benefits; the remaining 86 cents comes from employee contributions and investment returns. Most private pensions are 100 percent employer paid.

**Economic Engine.** Every dollar that Minnesota taxpayers invest in public pensions pays off with \$9.98 in economic activity

*Continued on page 20*



# Back & Forth

## QUESTIONS FOR KIM CROCKETT

How do you respond to the notion that public employees deserve the security of a public pension?

KC: Everyone who contributes to a retirement plan should get the benefit of that investment. What's not understood is that the system is set up to reward career employees who stay in their job for 30 years. They receive about 85 percent of their pre-retirement income. Everyone else gets a much lower benefit. This is called back-loading, and it's indefensible. Defenders of the public pension system know most people don't stay that long, especially

teachers. I know people who counted every day of their last five years on the job to protect their full pension.

The average teacher, like a friend of mine who worked in the St. Paul system for 15 years, needs to understand that if they leave their position—to raise a family, to pursue another career—how they would have done with a portable, individually owned contribution plan. They would have been better off.

When asked about the burden defined benefits puts on the taxpayer, they counter that the average payout is just \$21,000 a year.

KC: Pension systems love to use that number, but it's dishonest, because it includes all those exquisite teachers and police officers and city clerks who left before they hit a 30 year pension payout. A more honest number would be the average payout for a career employee, but even that fails to fully account for the total cost to employees and taxpayers.

And, by the way: \$21,000 a year? That's awful. It proves that we all need to be much more intentional about putting money away. We need to be more like my grandparents and great-grandparents, who were squirreling money away. They thought retirement was their responsibility. They weren't looking to government to bail them out if they had not saved.

Another piece of data that I'm curious how you would respond to estimates that for every dollar Minnesota taxpayers spend on pensions, nearly \$10 of economic activity is generated.

KC: That's another pension marketing myth. Pension critics call it the "magic bean theory." Like Minnesota pension dollars somehow grow taller and faster than regular dollars. Plus, it ignores what would happen to the dollar if it stayed in the economy. There's such dishonesty around the system, and I think that's partly why we're having such a hard time fixing it. But the math is catching up with the myths.

“  
*\$21,000 a year? That's awful.  
It proves that we all need to be  
much more intentional about  
putting money away.*  
”

What do you think of creating a hybrid solution, which would combine defined benefits and defined contributions?

KC: Well, there are really smart people who advocate for a “cash balance” approach. Where everyone would have a small guaranteed amount, and then the rest of their investment would be in a defined contribution. I understand why this is on the table. Not because it's the best approach, but because some see it as a way to get something done. But here's the thing. The defined benefit portion suffers from the same moral hazards

as the current system. And I'm not convinced that if this were legislated, the politicians wouldn't just do what they always do. We would fix it, and then all of a sudden it would start creeping in the wrong direction. We would guarantee too much. We wouldn't fund it. And then we'd be back in the same hole. So, no, I'm not a fan of anything that leaves defined benefits in place.

## QUESTIONS FOR KATIE HATT

If Minnesota's public pension system isn't in crisis, why are people on both sides of the aisle so concerned?

KH: I think we're living in a time when pensions are a political football and, sadly, saying there's a crisis is also a way that conservatives have found to be a primary avenue of attack on public workers and government. The other problem is that we're not thinking about the impact these conversations have on people's individual lives. One in seven of our senior

citizens is living in poverty. That's not a future we should wish on anyone after a lifetime of work. So, numbers are important, but numbers never tell the whole story. We need to approach public policy through a lens of, How does it impact people and how do we make sure people in Minnesota feel safe and secure in their retirement?

Why not set up a system around defined contributions, which essentially functions like a 401(k), and let the worker—as opposed to the taxpayer—assume the risks? Wouldn't that be more equitable and fair to everyone?

KH: Well, the first thing to keep in mind is that taxpayers as a whole pay only 14 cents of every dollar of pension benefits. The remaining share, 86 cents, comes from worker contributions and from investment earnings or investment returns. Not only that, but pension spending keeps main streets open for business.

In the end, we should oppose any attempt to transition pensions into [individual] sav-

ings plans. It's unnecessary and it's unstable. Instead, policymakers need to be working within the existing pension system, with public workers, and with the unions that represent those public workers. This is about protecting retirees, who are taxpayers, by the way. This is about honoring promises and the people we made them to.

How do you respond to the notion that young people don't stay in jobs long enough to reap the benefits of a pension system (which is geared toward career employees) and would be better off with a portable 401(k)?

KH: Well, first of all, I would reiterate that, when it comes to retirement security, nothing beats a real pension. What's more, a pension is a way where savings can accrue at a time when people would otherwise not be saving at all. It's stable. And, by the way, it's portable and continues to accrue interest over time. You never “lose” what you put in. Another way to put it is that pensions are one-leg of a three-legged stool, which includes savings and social security. It all fits together. It's not a zero-sum game.

“  
*This is about protecting retirees, who are taxpayers, by the way. This is about honoring promises and the people we made them to.*  
”

How do you respond to the argument that public pensions are at risk in part because of unreasonable expectations on the part of beneficiaries? That they can enjoy a pre-retirement lifestyle for decades?

KH: People don't work in public service to get rich. They care about educating our kids. They care about helping people who need essential services, who need to connect to housing, who need to connect to jobs. These are the people who plow our roads and provide essential services. We should take care of them. And I can't help but think that people making this argument are not only anti-worker and anti-union, they're fundamentally opposed to a functioning government. The other thing that

troubles me about the mindset you describe is that the average pension is \$21,000 thousand a year. Even if you add Social Security to that number, it's nowhere near enough. Finally, if you're going to talk about “expectations,” let's put it into proper context. Keep in mind rising housing costs, the rising cost of groceries, and rising healthcare costs. If you agree that economic security is important, then you need to have a real conversation about how much more financial pressure seniors are facing today.

*Panic Attack, continued from page 13*

Public-pension plans have long provided retirement security to our librarians, sanitation workers, correctional officers, and other public employees. Nationally, public-pension plans manage over \$3.6 trillion in assets. While many public plans are funded at lower lev-

els than they were before the financial crisis, many of them have also adopted more conservative return assumptions and adjusted mortality tables in recent years—examples of responsible management. States should always be considering the best policy to ensure full and timely

funding of their public pension plans so they can meet their obligations to active and retired public employees. States should resist, however, the calls of some to radically alter or eliminate public pensions due to panic over a nonexistent “crisis.” ❀

*Own Your Own Future, continued from page 16*

for public institutions, it makes a lot of sense,” University of California President Janet Napolitano told the *Sacramento Bee* in 2015 when the university reached a deal to shift new hires to defined contribution plans beginning in 2016. “It’s much more portable, so for many people that will be an attraction.”

Why would Minnesota deny the same option to the rest of its public employees? One argument you’ll hear is that portable plans increase employee turnover. There is turnover anyway, however, without any assurance that the promise of defined

benefit plans actually serves to recruit or retain talent. If pension contributions, which represent deferred wages, were going into a portable defined contribution plan, employees would get control over that earned benefit no matter where they work or for how long.

According to a study for the Manhattan Institute by Josh B. McGee, defined contribution plans achieve healthy, sustainable investment returns and offer a good, if not better, option for retirement than financially vulnerable defined benefit plans. McGee’s opponents fret

that defined contribution plans are “too risky.” This argument ignores the fact that defined benefit assets are invested in the same marketplace in which employees in the private sector participate.

In theory, defined benefit plans have many virtues, and defined contribution plans are far from perfect. But Minnesota, like so many states, has failed to properly fund and manage its funds. Retirees are still getting paid—as of now, at least—but the poor fiscal condition of public pensions demands our immediate, unflinching attention. ❀

*No Pensions, No Security, continued from page 17*

across the state, according to *Pensionomics 2016*, a report by the National Institute on Retirement Security.

Pension spending keeps Main Street businesses open, especially in Greater Minnesota. In Stearns County, for example, there are 5,151 retirees with \$106 million of annual pension benefits, according to the Minnesota Public Pensions Systems. An estimated 90 percent of retired public workers stay in Minnesota and spend their pension checks on local goods and services. They purchase food, clothing, and medicine at local stores, pay housing costs, and make larger purchases, like a car or laptop. These purchases create a steady ripple effect that directly supports 41,839 jobs and \$2 billion in wages in Minneapolis.

Public-sector retirees also paid \$499 million in federal, state, and local taxes directly out of their pension benefits in 2016.

**Shared Sacrifice.** While it’s sometimes been painful, government workers have supported every comprehensive pension

reform over the last decade. In 2010, for example, they fixed a \$4 billion funding gap by increasing their employee contributions and capping benefit increases. These sorts of reforms, coupled with strong investment returns, have stabilized Minnesota’s pension funds.

**Living Longer.** It’s true that state employees, teachers, and retirees have a life expectancy that is two years longer on average. This is not a reason to panic or abandon a system that has worked for generations, however. The challenge is to offset up to an additional \$1.4 billion in future liabilities.

Unions that represent government employees recognize this. To cite just one example, AFSCME Council 5, the largest union of active and retired state employees, supports a combination of sustainability measures to keep pension funds sound. They’ve endorsed an MSRS proposal to raise employee contributions from 5.5 to 6 percent, raise employer contributions from 5.5 to 7 percent, and

reduce the cost-of-living adjustment from 2 to 1.75 percent. Those measures alone would make up \$400 million in future liabilities.

**We’re Different Here.** In Minnesota, our public pension systems are healthy and well managed. There’s no reason to fix what isn’t broken. We have had a budget surplus for most of Governor Dayton’s tenure. In 2017, *USA Today* ranked Minnesota the nation’s best-run state, and the AARP called it the best place to retire.

We should oppose any attempt to transition secure pensions into risky savings plans. That would hurt Minnesota’s economy and undermine our state as the best place to grow old.

Instead, policymakers should work in partnership with the pension systems and unions that represent public workers. Together, we can all strengthen our already stable pension funds without breaking the bank or burdening retirees and taxpayers. ❀



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# A Representative Experience

The young people who've participated in Capitol Pathways, up close and personal

BY AMY GOETZMAN

**W**hen the people who make policy at the local, state, and federal level don't resemble the people whose lives are directly affected, they risk being neither fair nor effective. The Citizens League Capitol Pathways program's long-term ambition is to make government more representative of Minnesota's true, multiethnic identity for the betterment of all.

Now in its third year, the program has placed 93 college students from a multitude of cultural and racial backgrounds in internships with government offices, nonprofits, law firms, and lobbying groups. The young people experience real politics in the moment, build invaluable relationships,

and develop skills that will help them shape careers in public policy. In return, these hardworking junior staffers bring perspectives and ideas to the table that are too often underrepresented or untapped by their host or host organization on a day-to-day basis.

"Sometimes in the legislature, our work is divorced from the actual people it impacts. Just having someone involved who understands the communities affected makes a big difference," said Henry Jimenez, who hosts Capitol Pathways interns at the Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs. "Just having diverse people involved makes a difference in how we talk about the things we are proposing."

When the topic of homelessness and rental issues came up during a session, for instance, a Capitol Pathways participant with an interest in housing issues played a pivotal role. "Instead of statistics, we were talking about histories and people who would be impacted," remembers Jimenez. "People want their voices heard and they want government to know it impacts real lives and experiences. This program gives young people a chance to change the future for everyone."

**AMY GOETZMAN** is a writer and editor. Her work—which focuses on the arts, culture, technology, and environmental issues—has appeared in *MinnPost*, *Architecture MN*, and the *Star Tribune*.

## THE SOCIOLOGIST

**O**ne morning, **Robert Harper** was cruising through the capitol building on his way to a lunch meeting with his Capitol Pathways host, lobbyist Cap O'Rourke. In a building where gray is the most common hair color, the fact that the 24-year-old stood out for his age was not surprising. Unfortunately, the African American man also turned heads for something that, in an ideal world, would and should go unnoticed.

"A security guard stopped me and questioned what I was doing there," Walker recalls.

"I actually didn't think much about it. Security is normal at the capitol. But later I noticed that white interns, even dressed in street clothes, were able to move freely around the building. I realized that if I wasn't black, I probably wouldn't have attracted attention."

On paper, Capitol Pathways is about exposing future policy leaders of color to various career paths, enabling them to build relationships, and giving them first-hand

legislative experience. A desired side effect, though, is that everyone who walks the halls of government will begin to unconsciously accept that true diversity is a sign of health, not a cause for alarm. "In the U.S., we say that everyone can participate in government. But that's not really true," Harper said. "People can go to the capitol building and watch the legislative process, and they can write down their concerns, but to really have an impact, you need to find a way to get your views represented on the inside."

Harper's insider experience came when he was placed with O'Rourke Strategic Consulting, a lobbying organization that represents a wide variety of clients. One piece of legislation Harper worked on involved the regulation of e-cigarettes, something he never expected to become an expert on. "I researched the issue so deeply, from so many angles," he says. "Cap [O'Rourke] showed me that it's not about taking a side or pushing an agenda. To move legislation, you need to be able to see both sides."

Harper graduated with a degree in sociology and considered law school or corporate work. After his Capitol Pathways experience, though, he couldn't shake his feeling that it was by working in government that he could have the most impact. Now he's pursuing a master's degree in public policy with an emphasis on economic development at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs. "I hope to use my degree to one day work in a policy position where I can make well-informed decisions to improve the economic well-being of marginalized communities."



## THE NUMBERS MAN



There was no way **Khalid Dayib** could pursue a liberal arts degree.

“Coming from an immigrant family, there was a strong expectation that I would pursue something without risk and with a good income,” he says. “I was good at math, so I thought I wanted to be an accountant.”

Growing up as a Somali American in the Twin Cities, Dayib also wanted to help people in his community feel more connected to the Minnesota experience. A Capitol Pathways internship helped him marry those goals.

“I was really excited about the opportunity to get more diverse people into public policy and legislative work and help give everyone who makes up the state a seat at the table,” the 24-year-old says. “There is a lack of representation, so as a young person and a person of color, my presence alone makes somewhat of an impact.”

Dayib was placed with the Minnesota Environmental Partnership, a coalition that focuses on clean water, clean energy, and conservation of the state’s outdoors amenities. “I met tons of people, attended committee meetings, and absorbed the culture of the Senate, House, and governor’s office,” he said. Environmental stewardship is an important issue for Dayib, but the legislative experience he gained from the program translates to a broad range of policy positions. “You can’t teach the things I learned. A poli-sci class wouldn’t begin to touch what this experience gave me.”

After Dayib graduated from Metropolitan State University with an accounting degree, which pleased his family, he chose to re-enter the public sector. As a legislative coordinator for the commissioner’s office at the Minnesota Department of Revenue, he can link his numbers savvy with his interest in public policy, including tax policy.

“Capitol Pathways was crucial to my understanding of the legislative process. My experiences — everything from public speaking to negotiating skills to collaboration — directly affects my job right now,” says Dayib. “I became comfortable being the only person of color in the room and I’m so glad to be there, because when something comes up that affects your community, you can represent them; the odds of us all doing better go up when we all have representatives to speak for us.”

## THE CAREGIVER

Good intentions aren’t always good enough. **Faith Adeola** has seen well-meaning legislation fall short of its mark when the people creating the policy are not the people who are affected by it. For instance, when she was a Capitol Pathways intern, she saw legislators put together an after-school activities plan for Somali youth. The problem? None of the people behind the plan were Somali.

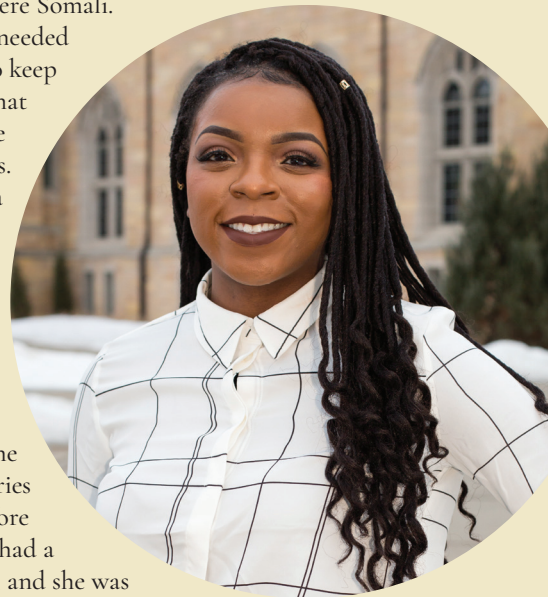
“They assumed that teens needed entertainment or activities to keep them busy after school, but that wasn’t a match for the culture or the community’s real needs. What was really needed was a jobs path for young people,” said Adeola, who communicated with Somali American families to learn about the community’s goals. Ultimately, that led to a revised version of a funding request.

Adeola’s parents came to the U.S. from Nigeria as missionaries and started a church here before she was born. She has always had a strong interest in health care, and she was in the Global Health program at the University of St. Thomas when she learned about the Capitol Pathways program. Adeola realized that public-health policies could be more effective if the people creating them represented a greater number of perspectives.

“Being at the capitol is eye-opening. As a person of color, it’s amazing to see how underrepresented we are in government,” said the 22-year-old. “We are very aware of that right now with the federal government, but the state government has the same problem.”

Capitol Pathways placed her with the law firm Fredrikson & Byron, P.A., as part of a government relations team that lobbies for issues that involve areas such as education and health care. That experience led to her current work as a health care educator with West Side Community Health Services. The next step?

“I want to get my master’s in public health and policy. The Capitol Pathways program helped me define my passion. I see how much work there is to be done, and I think people like me are the ones who can help do it.”



The 2018 Capitol Pathways cohort is in session.





# After-School Special

EDTalks leaves the classroom to edify and learn from its audacious audience

BY JACOB TAINTOR

I'm not a teacher, school administrator, or member of the PTA. Although I'm a new dad, which probably means I should start thinking more scholastically, my only tangible connection to formal learning these days involves writing a monthly check to keep up with a lingering college loan. And frankly, figuring out ways to keep the kid asleep until 6:00 a.m. requires all I have left of my senses.

So when I was asked to fill in for a fellow Citizens League staff member at an EDTalks event in early December—my first time at this event—I felt unprepared for what I thought would be an evening of wonky, inside-baseball, since my background is not in education. I wondered, will this fly over my head like a calculus textbook?

If I'd done my homework, I would've known better.

Walking into the Icehouse restaurant and music venue on Minneapolis's Eat Street, half expecting to see an overhead projector and squeaky chalkboard piled on the bar, I was greeted by Rachel Shields, manager of events and communications at AchieveMpls, an EDTalks co-

presenter along with the Citizens League, Pollen, and Indigo Education. A young professional who is as laid-back as she is highly organized, Shields gave me a quick tour of the industrial-chic space. Decidedly inviting with its warm lighting and eclectic indie music, it would prove the perfect place for a sold-out house of 150 participants to discuss subjects openly, honestly, and without hesitation. "This is the coolest place I've ever presented," Clay Cook, a PhD and researcher at the University of Minnesota's School of Psychology, said later in the evening, adding with mock seriousness, "most school districts actually aren't this cool."

According to Shields, the relaxed atmosphere of these events transcends the location's aesthetic appeal. Although EDTalks—which began in 2012 and take place four times per school year—focus on public education and attract many folks who work in that world, they're also consciously designed to attract spectators who are new to the topics discussed and who might not realize that what happens in our schools impacts daily life throughout our communities. (How some teachers treat students from different demographic backgrounds, for instance, can directly impact how comfortable they and their families are in other civic settings.)

The evening's host was writer, theater artist, and educator Adia Morris (perhaps best known to Citizens League members for her humorous monologues on TPT's *Almanac*). The guest speakers presenting for the Icehouse crowd were Cook and Candace Burkhardt, special-education coordinator at Indigo Education. They came to divulge illuminating data, share anecdotes about mindfulness practices in the classroom, and emphasize the impact of emotional well-being on a child's ability to learn.

"How many of you know an adult who can read well, do math, has the basic foundations of science and technology, but can't maintain healthy relationships?" Cook

asked the crowd at the outset of his talk. "Social and emotional skills are the best predictors of life success. That's what we know from longitudinal studies." He and Burkhardt, also a PhD, went on to wonder out loud why an emphasis on these life skills is so rare, considering how important they are to people's emotional and physical wellbeing later in life.

After about 40 minutes, the speakers wrapped up their formal comments and engaged in a spirited Q&A, allowing audience members to not only ask questions but share their own observations, opinions, and ideas. The unbridled brainstorming session unearthed a solution-oriented mix of fresh insights and innovative thinking. And it's a safe bet that much of what was said would not be discussed so freely, if at all, during an average parent-teacher conference or school board meeting.

Reviewing the event later with Shields, I learned that the spirited and solution-oriented nature of the gathering was not unusual. EDTalks regularly feature educators, journalists, artists, researchers, and policymakers who are committed to engaging outside the lines. Past conversations have covered subjects such as youth brain development, new perspectives on nutrition in school lunches, the effects of trauma on students, and the changing racial makeup of our classrooms.

The lesson I took with me? Tackling systemic challenges and helping individual educators thrive requires investment by a diversity of stakeholders. Teachers, administrators, and other academics will often lead the conversation, of course. But by opening the doors wide and inviting everyone to participate during happy hour on Nicollet Avenue, EDTalks not only opens minds, it generates momentum. No recess and no time-outs necessary.

University of Minnesota graduate **JACOB TAINTOR** is the Citizens League's marketing and communications specialist. He attended Maple Grove Senior High and (we're proud to report) didn't do half bad. [jtaintor@citizensleague.org](mailto:jtaintor@citizensleague.org)

Left to right: Dr. Candace Burkhardt, EDTalks moderator Adia Morris, and Dr. Clay Cook.



## SPRING 2018

### APRIL

20

#### **CAPITOL PATHWAYS: Social Hour**

League of Minnesota Cities, St. Paul, 4 p.m.

23

#### **EDTALKS: The importance of mentoring for teachers and administrators**

Icehouse, Minneapolis, 5:30 p.m.

### MAY

18

#### **CAPITOL PATHWAYS: Social Hour**

League of Minnesota Cities, St. Paul, 4:30 p.m.

### JUNE

7

#### **CAPITOL PATHWAYS: End-of-Session Celebration**

Mount Zion Temple, St. Paul, 6 p.m.

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#### **A GOOD DEBATE**

Icehouse, Minneapolis, 5:30 p.m.

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