

Citizens League Summer 2018

voice

Quality conversation. Healthy debate.

Ground Control

The pros and cons of copper-nickel mining in northern Minnesota



By Pahoua Hoffman

Moving Minnesota Forward

Too often, the problems we face are due to a lack of vision and collaboration

A question I often get when I'm out and about in the community is: Whom does the Citizens League serve? And I take pride in reminding members and potential members alike that while our organization's physical address is in St. Paul, we serve the entire state of Minnesota.

In 2017, for example, we took our twelve-year-old Policy and a Pint event series on the road to learn more about how various issues impact specific communities. In the spring we traveled to the Minnesota Discovery Center: The Museum of the Iron Range in Hibbing. The topic was the changing workforce and its needs on the Iron Range. In Rochester, community members discussed how the city ought to create workforce-priced housing to attract and retain high-salaried employees, entry-level workers, and everyone in between. Last fall, we went back north again, this time to Duluth, to learn about how social enterprises encourage locally controlled economic growth and sustainability by providing services such as job skills training.

For our Calling Home aging initiative, we convened listening sessions in cities across the state, such as Moose Lake and Perham, so we could learn firsthand about the unique challenges and opportunities communities face when dealing with issues including caregiving, housing, and transportation. It was during that process that we met Betty Dowe, who, after her husband died, launched Golden Happenings in Harmony, Minnesota, where 50 percent of the population is over the age of fifty-five. By offering activities for aging adults, including exercise classes, health checks, and various organized outings, Dowe hoped to help address senior isolation, which can be life-threatening, especially in rural communities. "Besides church, shopping, and

exercise class, I needed to be active with people," she explains.

To make Golden Happenings possible, Betty works with her local foundation to get funding, engages the Harmony Area Chamber of Commerce to get business involvement, and coordinates with city employees to get dedicated space. She describes this as "just getting things done." At the Citizens League, we often refer to multifaceted efforts like this as cross-sector collaboration.

It was cross-sector collaboration, in fact, that was the overarching theme at a recent leadership conference I attended at Harvard Business School with 119 leaders from around the country. The program's



We believe finding common ground demands equal parts conviction and compromise.

goal is to address the growing concern that the local, shared resources needed to drive American prosperity are not keeping pace with global standards. Our workforce skills, schools, and infrastructure, for instance, are not improving as fast as we need or, in too many cases, are deteriorating. And while most city leaders are quick to say that the problem is a lack of financial resources, case studies show that often the problem is a lack of vision and collaboration among various stakeholders.

At the Citizens League our goal is to engender cross-sector collaboration across the state, regardless of how divisive an issue seems initially. That's why our programming is so economically and geographically diverse. And why many of our initiatives, like the magazine you hold



PHOTO: NANCY MUSINGUZI

in your hand, are designed to encourage thoughtful conversation, debate, and ideation. We believe finding common ground demands equal parts conviction and compromise.

Consider the results of a recent (and ongoing) Citizens League study committee meeting on increasing the minimum wage in St. Paul. While we have months to go before the project is complete, and there are plenty of deeply held disagreements to work through, we've already found a large swath of shared ground. In the wake of a group exercise led by Citizens League Policy Director Angelica Klebsch, for instance, it became clear that, regardless of each committee member's position regarding a wage increase, there was a collective belief that all Minnesotans—workers and business owners alike—deserve the chance to afford life's necessities.

Similarly, while our editorial team put the final touches on this month's cover package on copper-nickel extraction in northern Minnesota (see page 6), it also became clear that—regardless of their overall position on the controversial proposals put forth by mining companies PolyMet and Twin Metals—each contributor felt very strongly about the need to balance economic development with environmental protection. A common vision that gives us hope that, despite the seeming intransigence on both sides regarding how to best achieve that balance, there is still room to find a way forward.

PAHOUA HOFFMAN is the Citizens League's executive director. phoffman@citizensleague.org

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COVER BY TOM FOTY; PHOTO, TOP: COURTESY OF SUSAN PHELPS; ABOVE RIGHT: MICHAEL DVORAK



Minimum Wage, Maximum Effort

Balancing business bottom lines with livable incomes for workers is at the heart of contentious minimum-wage debates across the country. With the issue coming to St. Paul, the Citizens League has convened an independent committee to study it and make recommendations to the city based on input from a variety of stakeholders and community members.

“There are a lot of interesting voices in the room,” says committee cochair and SEIU Healthcare Minnesota political director Rick Varco. “It’s a group with a lot of people with strong feelings, and people who are trying to work their way through the issue—people with strong opinions who are also coming to listen and learn.”

The study committee includes 21 individuals from the corporate world, food service, organized labor, small business, and civic organizations. The goal was to have representatives from executive circles as well as hourly wage earners.

“We’re getting everybody on the same page in terms of base understanding of wages, and other cities and the laws they’ve enacted, and the subsequent impact on the marketplace,” says St. Paul Area Chamber of Commerce President/CEO Brenda “B” Kyle.

In addition to internal dialogue, the group is reviewing national research and hopes to make recommendations this August. Naturally, everyone at the table is aware of the gradually phased-in minimum-wage law passed in Minneapolis last year. “The Minneapolis debate provides a lot of important information, so we don’t have to reinvent the wheel,” Varco says.

“We haven’t gotten to the contentious stage yet, but I imagine it will be challenging,” Kyle says. “There will not be a 100 percent winner, no matter what we decide. But we’re all burdened with this responsibility, and in that, we’re united.”

Group Equity in Edina

After more than a year of meetings, interviews, listening sessions, and the compilation of an anonymous online survey, the Edina Race and Equity Task Force submitted 21 recommendations for addressing long-term racial inequity in the city. The Edina City Council subsequently approved the report in mid-May.

Recommendations include increasing representation of people of color in Edina government, strengthening citizen oversight of police misconduct, and taking steps to make public spaces more welcoming for minority and multilingual residents. Although

the Citizens League was contracted to help facilitate community conversation, the task force independently made conclusions and recommendations.

“I’ve lived in Edina for more than 30 years, and racial equity is a huge part of my life,” says Jessica Kingston, director of Human Rights and Equal Economic Opportunity for St. Paul and cochair of the task force. “When the city decided to embark on this journey, I jumped at the chance, because this is my community.”

“It was a very well-thought-out process,



**This process is
always a journey, and
there are times
when conversations can
get tough.”**

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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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Met Council: To Be Continued...

During the recently concluded Minnesota legislative session, the Citizens League supported a bipartisan bill introducing reforms for the Metropolitan Council. The Met Council was formed in 1967 and is the regional planning organization for the seven-county Twin Cities area. It has a wide range of powers and responsibilities that include the allocation of federal funds for public transportation systems.

The bill contained provisions similar to recommendations made by the Citizens League Met Council Task Force in 2016; it moved through the state's House and Senate but ultimately was not passed. The debate over the Met Council is expected to continue in coming sessions.

The Citizens League's recommendations include a number of checks and balances for council members' terms; increased input from citizens and officials; and greater transparency.

The bill supported by the Citizens League was one of three considered by the legislature; the other two include measures that the Citizens League does not support, including expansion of



COURTESY OF PETER CALLAGHAN/MINNEPOST

Met Council membership and a requirement that members be elected officials.

Anoka County Commissioner Scott Schulte is skeptical of more measured reform.

“The Met Council is something to be celebrated, not denigrated.”

“We would still have a body appointed by one person—the governor—who has a constituency of one,” Schulte says. “They would still have full taxing authority for the seven-county metro area, and

would still not be accountable to the people they tax.”

Edina Mayor James Hovland points out that Met Council duties are more expansive than other organizations of its kind across the country. While he recognizes the concerns of those who want to radically reshape it, he also warns against “throwing the baby out with the bathwater.”

“It doesn't mean I don't see practical changes in the model,” Hovland says. “But the Council is something to be celebrated, not denigrated. Its regional governance mode is admired throughout the country. It's a different sort of entity in which things have been undertaken in a collaborative way.”

with working groups that mixed citizens of Edina as well as city staffers,” says task force cochair James Pierce, who is chief information officer for Cargill Animal Nutrition. “It was good to have that expert assistance.”

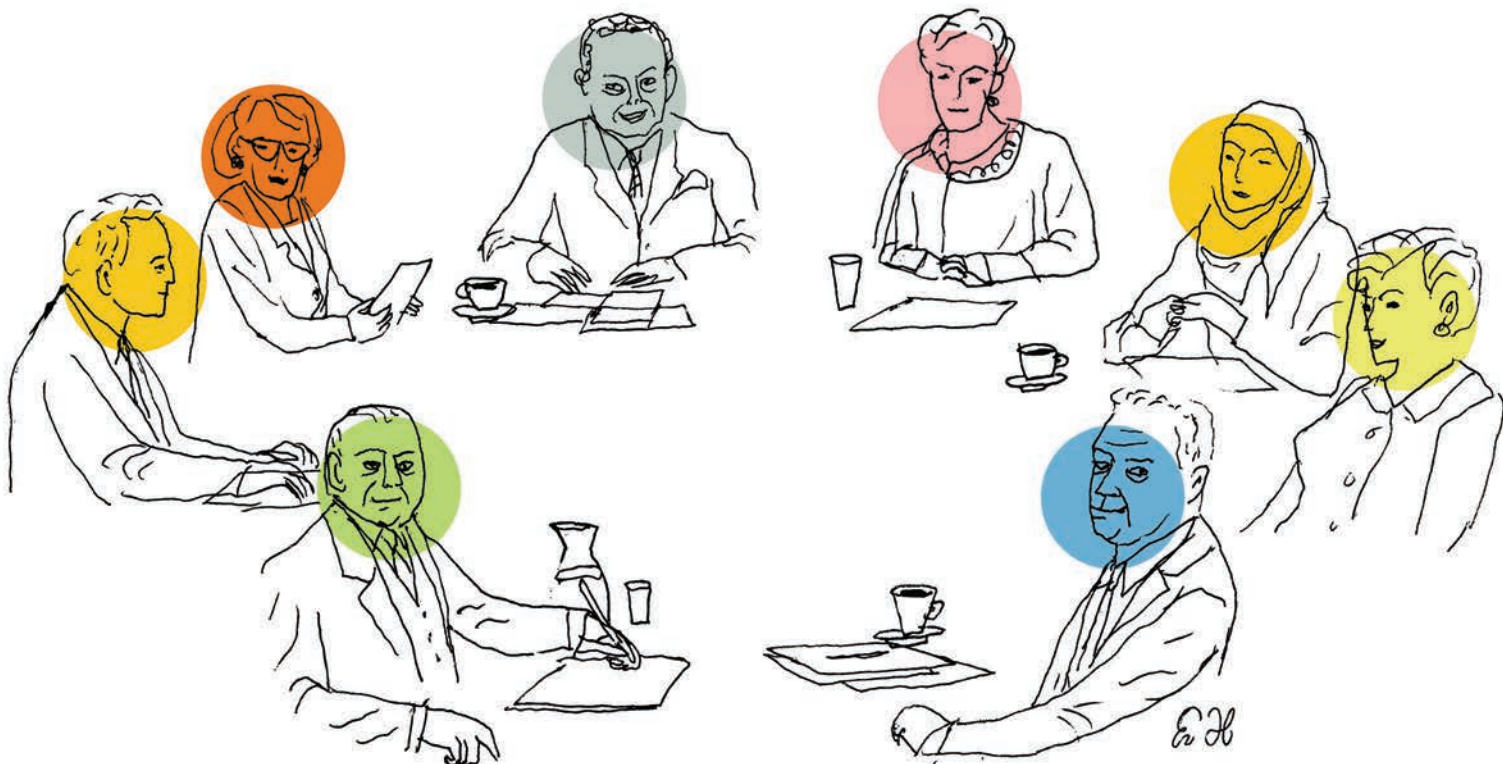
The group was initially formed in response to a viral video in 2016 that showed an Edina police officer handcuffing an African American man, which raised unsettling questions in the community. “This process is always a journey, and there are times when conversations can get tough,” Kingston explains. “I think it has to do with the fact that we're dealing with race—not

one of those conversations is comfortable.”

The task force has laid out a rubric for the city to evaluate its performance in services, institutions, and facilities. The City of Edina is in the process of creating a plan to administer the task force's guidelines.

“I can't imagine there won't be some change,” Pierce says. “The city had a goal of improving diversity even before the task force was commissioned. I would be surprised and disappointed if we didn't make some meaningful change. I do expect that.”

—Items by *Quinton Skinner*



SAGE Council

The Civic Caucus goes beyond the headlines to provide the public with nonpartisan policy recommendations

By Quinton Skinner

Sunlight streams through the windows of a meeting room off the main hall of the Woman’s Club of Minneapolis, where two tax experts have come to testify in front of the regular Friday-morning meeting of the Civic Caucus. Coffee duly poured, they’re being peppered with probing, detailed questions about the quality and weight of the tax bills before the state legislature during the 2018 session, and what those bills mean in relation to sweeping legislation recently passed by the U.S. Congress.

Like a band of wise elders, the dozen (mostly) silver-haired interrogators of the Civic Caucus draw from backgrounds in business, academia, nonprofits, and the law; it’s no exaggeration to say there are centuries

of public-policy education and expertise at the table. And, notably, although the conversation revolves around fundamentally different viewpoints on government—and how to fill its coffers—the talk is pragmatic and civil, steeped in a tradition of bipartisanship that today seems a lost art.

With roots going back to the 1950s, when a group of policy-minded friends met for regular breakfasts to chew on the issues of the day, the Civic Caucus has evolved into something unique amid the hot-take public conversations of the day: a voice dedicated to in-depth dialogue based on the notion that complicated problems merit a measured, sophisticated approach.

“We like to say we’re the

Civic Caucus University, with about 500 volunteer professors,” says former Minneapolis City Council member Paul Ostrow, today an assistant county attorney for Anoka County and chair of the Caucus. “We believe strongly that our niche relates to the importance of an educated public, and that those who are in positions to make decisions should have a depth of knowledge that isn’t based on tribe or ideology but on what actually works.”

The Caucus claims former state legislator Verne C. Johnson, who served as the Citizens League executive director from 1957 to 1967, as its founder—and credits his decision in 2002 to focus on expanding the group’s footprint through email and digital delivery as crucial for

an undertaking with decidedly analog roots. Today the Caucus reaches a web audience of more than 5,500 people, including officeholders and candidates, as well as self-described policy wonks from the private and public sectors.

“We really are like a council of experience and wisdom,” says Executive Director Janis Clay (who stepped into the role in 2017, succeeding former Citizens League Research Director Paul Gilje). “We see all sides and we talk about all sides. And we own nothing except a Bluetooth conference phone—that’s our brick and mortar.”

Former U.S. Senator David Durenberger says the Caucus is based on a pragmatic mindset of decades past. “The people on that mailing list do yearn for the old



The Civic Caucus (Abridged)

The online archive of the Civic Caucus comprises hundreds of interviews with policy experts; reader responses; and position reports on every aspect of public life and policy. A few highlights:

Concordia University Professor Bruce Corrie on the threats to economic competitiveness when minority populations aren't integrated in terms of education and opportunity, with specific policy recommendations for igniting the economic dynamism and potential of those groups.

Podcast Producer Anne Carlson about her series *The One Thing We Can Agree On*, which promotes greater empathy for the opinions and experiences of those who voted in the 2016 election for U.S. president—particularly focused on breaking down stereotypes, misinformation, and misunderstanding.

Education Expert Ted Kolderie detailing three legislation-based options for changes in education at the school-board level in light of trends in viewpoints on nationalism, the role of the state in public life, and the contribution of the civic sector in providing ideas for innovation from groups and individuals.

“Looking Back, Thinking Ahead: Strengthening Minnesota’s Public Policy Process” is a 2016 report based on a yearlong study composed of 39 individual interviews and 10 internal discussions; it identifies specific and pressing needs for innovative action in areas of education, transportation, public safety, health care, and the environment—and calls for the philanthropic community to take an enhanced role in promoting study and analysis of major issues.

“A Statewide Crusade to Secure Minnesota’s High-Quality Workforce” compiled the viewpoints of 53 experts in a 2015 report sounding an early alarm, now accepted by most, that the state faces a scarcity of talent and training in the light of new jobs requirements and a shrinking working-age population—which threatens Minnesota’s long-enjoyed workforce advantages.

days, when someone would stand up and be quizzed by people who were willing to have their viewpoints converted,” he says. “A viewpoint then didn’t have to be bought 100 percent by either side, but it almost always set a starting line that had to be crossed to set priorities for the state.”

In times arguably characterized by ideology and purity tests on both sides of the aisle, the Civic Caucus’s DNA is staunchly nonpartisan. You could call it cerebral, rooted in finding an agreement on the technical nature of public challenges, then working from there to discuss a range of approaches.

“It’s problematic that today a lot of the discussion is dumbbell-shaped,” says former Citizens League Executive Director and journalist Ted Kolderie. “At one end is deploring the problem: *Oh boy, this is wrong and this is bad*. At the other extreme is a lot of *We have to*, and a lot of visions of how things could be done just right. In between, it’s pretty skinny.”

The Caucus has compiled a library of interviews and policy analyses on its website—a formidable archive that essentially represents a free deep-dive education on public-policy issues, including subjects such as education, labor, housing, eldercare, and economic development. Its internal conversations, however, hinge on larger questions of how to make its voice heard in a very different era in legislation, journalism, and public discourse. There’s a profound need for the depth of thinking the Caucus represents, and the group is poised to become an essential voice.

“We have thoughtful people with good ideas that don’t seem to see the light of day the way they should,” says Ostrow. “There is a level of frustration, and that’s one of the things that

we’ve been working through. Do we think of ourselves primarily in terms of education or do we want to be advocates? Ultimately, our sweet spot is being advocates for the marketplace of ideas—and democracy flourishes when good ideas get considered and debated and implemented.”

Kolderie believes that, even today, Minnesota has a fairly unique politics of bipartisanship that somewhat contrasts with the profound national divide—a tradition that the Caucus hopes to nurture forward for upcoming generations. Clay points to success influencing legislators on the details of their proposals and is only half joking when she says she is thinking big about the organization’s potential.

“I want to call up Mark Zuckerberg and offer us up as a *positive* project,” she says—and it’s true, the work of the Caucus is the antithesis of social media’s influence on how politics is discussed. “We think we can do more to tap civic-minded potential.”

As the Friday meeting adjourns, the dozen interrogators pack up and head out to enjoy the springtime morning. The meeting’s minutes will be posted to the Caucus website (www.civicaucus.org), a set of detailed insights and recommendations for cutting the Gordian knot of state tax legislation—for this session and those to come. Next week there’ll be another puzzle to solve, and another after that.

“That’s what the Civic Caucus tells us,” Durenberger adds. “It’s not that we’ve run out of ideas, and we sure as heck haven’t run out of problems.” ❄️

Quinton Skinner is a Twin Cities-based writer whose work has appeared in numerous magazines and newspapers. He is the cofounder of Logosphere Storysmiths.

“Our sweet spot is being advocates for the marketplace of ideas. Democracy flourishes when good ideas get considered and debated and implemented.”



IT'S NOT A STRETCH to say that the particular composition of the rock in northern Minnesota helped shape U.S. history. From the late 1800s onward, the vast seams of iron-rich red rock that stretch across the state's northern geography produced enough steel to propel the Industrial Revolution. Automobiles, infrastructure, and defense depended on Minnesota iron ore, and immigrants from 43 countries came by the thousands to pull it out of Vermillion, Mesabi, and Cuyuna mines. Their blended culture defines the region known as the Iron Range.

Minnesota still produces about 75 percent of the United States' iron output—about 36 million tons in 2017. However, World War II largely depleted the high-grade concentrated ore that put Minnesota on the map. Today, modern processes produce taconite pellets from lower-grade ore. Far fewer workers are needed: what 12,000 workers accomplished in the 1970s can now be done with fewer than 4,000. And the woes of decades-long, region-wide economic decline—including

some places, they point out, such mines have created widespread environmental disaster. The companies argue that there are key differences in Minnesota's mineral composition and landscape that make such comparisons largely irrelevant. Opponents emphasize the temporary nature of the mines and the permanent changes to the landscape and ecosystem, including risks to the nearby Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCA) and the Lake Superior watershed. Local small businesses are fighting foreign corporations. Even politics-as-usual has been disrupted in the union-strong, once reliably blue Eighth District; when pro-mining congressman Rick Nolan suddenly joined the state's gubernatorial race this spring, the DFL declined to endorse anyone to replace him.

Over a ten-year discussion and review process, residents, mine companies, area business owners, politicians, unions, scientists, and visitors have weighed in on a discussion that, while centered on jobs and the environ-

Ground Control

Iron ore helped shape Minnesota's culture and history. Now, copper-nickel mining is **dividing** those who want to protect the environment and those who want to see more mining in the Northland.

crime, addiction, and the exodus of younger generations—have settled in, making citizens and their elected representatives eager to find a new way to create jobs for the industry.

Enter copper-nickel mining.

Northern Minnesota has an immense reserve of valuable metal deposits, including copper, nickel, platinum, palladium, gold, and silver. To begin extracting the minerals, two new copper-nickel facilities have been proposed by the companies PolyMet (based in Toronto and backed by Swiss conglomerate Glencore) and Twin Metals (a subsidiary of the Chilean company Antofagasta).

The high-tech method required to extract copper-nickel, called sulfide mining, differs from iron ore mining in that it uses heat, pressure, and chemicals to extract minerals from the rock. And because the process releases mercury and sulfur into the air and discharges toxic sulfuric acid into ground and surface waters, it's become the subject of contention and controversy.

PolyMet and Twin Metals emphasize that their plans adhere to state and federal environmental regulations. Opponents say there is no example of a copper-nickel mine anywhere in the world that has not polluted the surrounding land and water; in

ment, reveals tensions around the area's shifting cultural identity, political landscape, and economic potential.

Jobs . . . The Range economy now centers on health care, which employs more than 33,000 people in the area, and tourism, which employs 6,390, with another 7,590 in food service. Businesses have proliferated as people come to the Range to camp, fish, bike, ski, snowmobile, and retire. The BWCA is an international attraction that draws more than 250,000 annual visitors.

"Clean water is what attracts people to the area," says Matt Norton, policy director for Save the Boundary Waters. "More than the BWCA is at stake; the area's wealth, businesses, and jobs depend more on water than on mining."

But many of the area's service sector jobs don't pay well or are seasonal. They don't have the high salaries, good benefits, or pensions the mines provided. PolyMet estimates its mine will create about 300 jobs that should last for twenty years, the anticipated duration of the mine. The Twin Metals mine would bring several hundred more jobs. "These will be the best jobs you can secure in that region of the state," says Bob McFarlin, government affairs advisor for Twin Metals. "There

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 they are presented with a variety of in-depth thought on important issues, Citizens League members, lawmakers, and the wider public will be better equipped to sort through the hollow, contrarian rhetoric that too often hijacks productive discussion.

will be a wide variety of opportunities, from computing, technology, math, and science to operating heavy equipment. These are good jobs that you can raise a family on.” In addition, he says, those jobs would create additional spin-off jobs—maybe two for every one.

Aaron Brown, a lifelong Range resident who writes the Minnesota Brown website (www.minnesotabrown.com), a record of the region’s economy, culture, and relationship with mining, says it’s unlikely many local workers would find a place in the new mines. “Mines struggle to find the workers with the skills modern mining requires—these aren’t just laborers. They aren’t driving a truck or punching a clock at the mine

documents “with respect to compliance with the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act and United States money laundering statutes.”)

If PolyMet gets the go-ahead, it would pave the way for the much larger Twin Metals project, an underground mine encompassing 30,000 acres along the Kawishiwi River near Ely. The site is two miles from the BWCA. Environmental groups say there is significant risk to wildlife and watersheds across the region, including the BWCA, Rainy Lake, the St. Louis River, and Lake Superior. Both projects are upstream from reservation lands. Tribal organizations say that sulfide pollution would harm wild rice and their way of life.

Norton says that pollution is inevitable:

“ A ten-year discussion and review process revealed tensions around the area’s shifting cultural identity, political landscape, and economic potential.

like Grandpa did,” he says. “Those jobs have been consolidated in many industries, including mining, due to automation. Where once there would be ten people doing a job, now there is only need for one.”

Or fewer. “Human-free mines are coming next. The equipment will be automated, the workers will be in a remote command center, and it doesn’t have to be here,” says Brown, who argues that a mix of industries is the key to the region’s future. “We need a diversified rural economy. The next generation already knows that. They are interested in the same kinds of jobs kids everywhere are—software design, modern careers you can do anywhere. You can do them here.”

... Versus the Environment. The PolyMet mine is the closest to becoming a reality. That project has passed through much of the permitting and review process. In June 2018, a land swap was finalized between PolyMet and the state that traded 6,900 acres of private forest within the Superior National Forest for 6,650 acres of public land at the mine site, giving the company surface rights to land for which it already controlled mineral rights. The exchange gives PolyMet more than thirty square miles in the Hoyt Lakes area for its mine and processing operations. The mine must next pass final environmental review; obtain state, local, and federal permits; and demonstrate its financial viability to complete the project and pay potential cleanup costs. (One possible hitch in that series of events: In July, Glencore, the company that is providing financial backing to PolyMet, was served a subpoena by the U.S. Justice Department requesting

“Sulfide mining has a 100 percent track record of polluting the environment. There is no technology that can prevent the same failures that have occurred everywhere else from occurring in the most water-rich piece of federal real estate in the U.S.”

McFarlin disagrees: “The certainty of environmental destruction is wrong,” he says. “It has been argued by groups that oppose mining that merely issuing permits will mean the end of all environmental standards in the area, and that’s not true. We are confident that we can propose a project that will meet environmental standards as set forth by the state and federal governments. The rule of law in the U.S. will prevail.”

But whose law? In 2016, the Obama administration issued a twenty-year moratorium on mining leases in the area, citing risk to the environment. In 2017, the Trump administration’s Interior Department reversed that decision.

In June 2018, state and national environmental groups filed two lawsuits against the Department of the Interior and the Bureau of Land Management, and a group of nine business owners who operate in the BWCA area filed a third suit. The lawsuits maintain that the administration’s arbitrary reversal violates federal law, ignores the science that led to the original moratorium, and exposes the region as well as the plaintiffs’ livelihoods to irreparable harm.

“No matter what happens, no one is going to be happy. No one is going to get what they want,” Brown concludes. “A lot of people up here are looking at these projects and saying, ‘That doesn’t look smart for a couple hundred jobs.’ But others are saying, ‘Those jobs could save our town.’” ❄️

THE PARTICIPANTS

Is Copper-Nickel Mining Properly Regulated?



FRANK ONGARO is executive director of Mining Minnesota (www.miningminnesota.com), a trade group that promotes nonferrous mining in northeastern Minnesota.

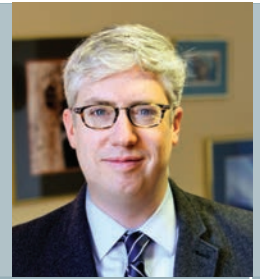
THE CONCLUSION:

Thanks to standard state and federal review processes, Minnesota can profit from mining growth without compromising the environment.

THE ARGUMENTS:

- The state has access to over four billion tons of untapped copper, nickel, and platinum group metals, which are essential to a green economy.
- Multiple government agencies require strict adherence to water quality.
- Taxpayers participated in a public review process.
- Relying on foreign countries to supply essential metals threatens human rights, the global environment, and national security.

KEVIN LEE is mining program director and senior staff attorney at the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy (www.mncenter.org), a nonprofit advocacy group focused on water, land use and transportation, clean energy, natural resources, and mining.



THE CONCLUSION:

Minnesota's mining standards are insufficient to protect the state from the risks of copper-nickel mining.

THE ARGUMENTS:

- Thanks to its abundance of nonferrous metals, Minnesota is in a position to establish and enforce environmental and safety standards for an entirely new industry.
- Ever-bigger mines and interest in lower-grade ore have increased the probability of environmental disaster. Previously established regulations are obsolete or have been recently weakened.
- Copper-nickel mining projects should avoid open-pit mining and using tailings dams, which have a track record of collapse.
- An independent panel of engineers, not state agencies with conflicted interests, should review mining permits and plans.

Is Copper-Nickel Mining Essential to Economic Development?



MICHELLE LEE is an award-winning journalist and DFL candidate seeking to replace Representative Rick Nolan to become the Eighth Congressional District's first congresswoman.

THE CONCLUSION:

The pursuit of copper-nickel mining in Minnesota for economic development is unsustainable and shortsighted.

THE ARGUMENTS:

- Copper-nickel mines are being proposed by foreign-owned corporations with a record of environmental degradation and ill treatment of workers.
- The jobs ostensibly created by copper-nickel mining will be impacted by automation and are limited to the twenty- to twenty-five-year life of the mine.
- To ensure economic growth, northeastern Minnesota should invest in environmentally stable industries.
- Pristine water and land attracts tourism and generates wealth. Copper-nickel mining exposes these invaluable resources to too much risk.

NANCY NORR is director of regional development at Minnesota Power, a Duluth-based utility company, and serves as chair of Jobs for Minnesotans (jobsforminnesotans.org), a coalition of labor, community, and business leaders who support copper-nickel mining.



THE CONCLUSION:

Responsible copper-nickel mining is essential to Minnesota's economic future and growth.

THE ARGUMENTS:

- Low incomes and economic vulnerability is a top concern in Greater Minnesota, where attracting and retaining young workers remains a challenge.
- Thanks to state-of-the-art technology, copper-nickel mining promises to continue Minnesota's rich mining history and tradition.
- For every job in the copper-nickel mining industry, two additional jobs will be created in other industries, such as manufacturing, retail, and hospitality.
- Long-term, local access to these nonferrous metals results in economic independence and ensures ethical standards for natural resource development are upheld.

Safe and Sound

A robust copper-nickel industry can also be environmentally responsible

By Frank Ongaro

Minnesota is a mining state. We are blessed to have an abundance of mineral resources. At well over four billion tons, our deposit of base and precious metals is one of the world's largest, representing a significant percentage of the domestic supply of these minerals.

From plumbing and electrical to automobiles and cell phones, these metals are used in many aspects of our daily lives. According to the Minerals Education Coalition, every baby born in the United States in 2017 will consume a lifetime total of 3,188 million pounds of minerals, metals, and fuels.

Over the last decade, several Minnesota companies have worked to create safe, sustainable practices that will help the state stay true to its traditions and become a profitable player in the marketplace. Along the way, we've fielded queries from those opposed to mineral development due to concerns about protecting water resources, the need for environmental safeguards, how to responsibly pursue reclamation after mining is completed, and whether or not taxpayers will be on the hook when modifications or mistakes are made along the way. These are all issues worthy of discussion. We all want to protect our clean air and water for our children and grandchildren.

Ultimately, the central precept underlying each question is whether or not Minnesota can enjoy both mining growth and a healthy environment. And the answer is an unequivocal yes.

From mineral exploration to mine closure, the state and federal governments require environmental review and adherence to strict standards to protect our air, water, land, and taxpayers.



Thanks to the rigorous and well-established National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Minnesota Environmental Policy Act (MEPA), no proposed mining project in Minnesota can move forward unless state and federal regulatory agencies determine that it meets strict environmental protection standards. NEPA and MEPA also ensure that impacted communities and other concerned citizens have the opportunity to review and comment on specific proposals.

Additionally, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency compel companies to comply with multiple water quality standards to assure clean and safe water. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Forest Service, and Bureau of Land Management also require a thorough environmental review of potential impacts before permits are issued. Reclamation of all mining and processing activity is mandated and provisions for post-closure maintenance are in place to eliminate the potential for water quality problems. These agencies also have authority to require corrective actions to remedy any issues.

Taxpayers are protected and will not be on the hook for paying for anything that is the financial responsibility of mining companies. Minnesota requires state-managed and annually adjusted bankruptcy-proof financial assurance to cover any possible costs before permits can be issued, and a permit can be revoked if a company does not comply.

In fact, when the state begins to responsibly tap its natural resources, Minnesota taxpayers across the state will directly benefit. In studies conducted by the University of Minnesota–Duluth, the projected positive economic impact of future environmentally responsible copper-nickel mining projects includes the creation of more than 5,000 jobs related to mining operations, 12,000 jobs related to mining construction, \$1.5 billion in annual wages, and more than \$2.5 billion in annual economic production. Payroll and sales taxes for Minnesota, net proceeds taxes for local governments, and royalties to the School Trust Fund provide revenue to every school district in Minnesota.

Keep in mind, copper and nickel production, when thoughtfully pursued, can be as safe as it is successful. The Flambeau Mine across our state border is an excellent example of a copper



We cannot ignore the fact that mining is essential to our nation's desire for alternative sources of energy. We need these metals if we want a green economy.

mine that operated and closed in full compliance with Wisconsin laws. In addition, Eagle Mine in Michigan's Upper Peninsula is operating and safely producing nickel and copper.

What's more, we cannot ignore the fact that mining is essential to our nation's desire for alternative sources of energy. We need these metals if we want a green economy. The largest wind turbines require four tons of copper, and electric vehicles can have as much as twice the amounts of copper and nickel as a regular automobile.

Finally, while the demand for these resources continues to grow, the U.S. Geological Survey clearly shows our nation is significantly import-dependent on all these metals. Which brings up the question: Where do you want your metals to come from? China, Russia, and India, where there is little or no regard for environmental safeguards? African nations, where there are no workplace safeguards and children are being injured and killed? Having to rely on foreign countries for our supply of these necessary metals threatens our national security.

We have the opportunity and responsibility to mine these metals here in Minnesota. We can do it responsibly. We can do it with Minnesota jobs. And we will be able to hold up our operations to the country and entire world as a model of how to do it right. 🌟

Too Dam Risky

Minnesota must update safety standards to prevent mine waste disasters

By Kevin Lee

Minnesota stands at a crossroads unlike any in our state's history. As PolyMet seeks our state's first-ever permit for a copper-nickel mine, the rest of the mining industry watches and waits. Several more mining companies (including industry giants Antofagasta, Teck, and Rio Tinto) have projects for Minnesota that are in the early stages of development. That means many keen observers are waiting to see how our state will establish and enforce environmental and safety standards for an entirely new industry.

Unfortunately, Minnesota's standards for responsible mining are unprepared to sufficiently address pollution risks from copper-nickel mining. The laws and regulations governing nonferrous mining were crafted in the 1990s and have never been used. Since that time, the industry has changed dramatically, and so have the risks. New processes have created interest in lower ore grades that were not considered economically productive decades ago.

Mining companies are building ever-bigger mines to squeeze economies of scale and maximize profits. This new wave of mega-mines comes at an unacceptably high cost. As mines get bigger, so too does the amount of waste they create. The PolyMet project would produce a pile of mine waste covering nine square miles (about 4,500 football fields) with 900 acres of contaminated water perched on top, about the size of New York City's Central Park.

At its simplest, the processing of copper-nickel ore involves grinding the rock into powder, then mixing it with large amounts of water and chemicals to capture the tiny metal particles. What remains is a slurry of crushed rock and water—often called mine tailings—that contains everything from arsenic to zinc. While locked away in bedrock, these minerals do no harm, but when released into the environment by the mining process, they can cause cancers, infant mortality, developmental impairments, and other health problems. The challenge faced by most mining companies is what to do with this waste slurry. Like many companies, PolyMet will simply pipe it behind a large dam, leaving what is essentially a very large pile of wet, powdered rock with a polluted lake on the top.

Unfortunately, economic pressures have forced mine projects to get bigger, so mine waste storage facilities have gotten commensurately bigger as well. With more mine waste dams holding back record amounts of mine waste, failures have become increasingly catastrophic, sometimes releasing their entire contents all at once.

In 2014, the tailings dam at the Mount Polley copper-gold mine in British Columbia suddenly collapsed, instantly releas-

ing 1.3 billion gallons of mine waste into Hazelton Creek and Quesnel Lake, a drinking water source for area residents. The sudden deluge scoured trees from Hazelton Creek and turned what was a four-foot-wide stream into a raging river 150 feet wide. Water sampling showed that the tailings spill contaminated Quesnel Lake with copper, iron, aluminum, and phosphorus, chemicals that can cause liver damage and kidney disease.

An equally catastrophic, even more horrifying incident took place at the Fundão tailings dam in Brazil. At 3:45 p.m. on November 5, 2015, shouts began coming in over the radios at the Samarco iron mine: the dam was collapsing. Workers below the



dam looked up to see the entire slope undulating like a wave, as if it were melting. And observers reported that the mine waste that had been solid ground just minutes before transformed into a roiling river. The ensuing deluge destroyed a town and killed nineteen people. The contaminant plume, easily seen from space, entered the Atlantic Ocean hundreds of miles downstream as a large smear of brown amid surrounding azure seas.

Both the Mount Polley and Samarco disasters were preventable. They were not *natural* disasters. They were human disasters. *Continued on page 18*

Back & Forth

QUESTIONS FOR FRANK ONGARO

Environmentalists say regulations governing nonferrous mining were created in the 1990s. And while the industry and the attendant risks have changed since then, the regulations have not. Is that an accurate statement or an oversimplification?

FO: It's true that in the nineties, a significant amount of the nonferrous rules were promulgated. It's also true that every stakeholder was at the table. The same groups who are saying that the laws aren't what they should be were there, participating in putting the standards, laws, requirements, and rules in place. And, yes, technology has improved for the better. But that's helped diminish risk, not exacerbate it. Companies have to continue to meet the standards each and every year: staff from the

Mine Safety Health Administration practically live on site, and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and Department of Natural Resources visit the properties on a regular basis. So if something happens, or there's a violation of any standards, it gets corrected—and everyone involved will work together to mitigate the issue. They go back to the drawing board, they improve the technology based on what's available, and onward we go—a more productive operation, as in any industry.

There's a concern that tailings dams are particularly susceptible to accidents and mistakes, whereas dry storage is more effective and cost-effective. Is there any chance the projects currently proposed could still shift to dry storage?

FO: Dry stack storage is an option for the industry. Right now, though, we have only one project: PolyMet. It was proposed and scoped, it has gone through environmental review, and it's been determined that the tailing facility is adequate and permanent for the twenty-year life of the mine. Future projects coming forward may or may not propose something different. We'll see.

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If something happens, or there's a violation of any standards, it gets corrected. Everyone involved will work together to mitigate the issue.
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Tailings dams have failed at other sites, though. Isn't that a concern?

FO: I think all companies look at other companies in other jurisdictions around the planet and learn from whatever problems happen to arise. But a lot of the comparisons that are made—Mount Polley [in British Columbia], Fundão [in Brazil]—are apples and oranges. Different projects have a different structure, different slopes, different types of binders to ensure stability, etc. So the idea that, “Oh, if it happened in British Columbia, it can happen in northeastern Minnesota,” that's pretty speculative. Plus, it's important

to keep in mind that companies in Minnesota are required to identify ways to prevent pollution and problems in the first place. And we have systems in place, structurally and financially, to deal with problems if they arise. So, you know, first you avoid it. Then, if there is a problem, you have something in place to make sure it can be addressed. Can you plan for everything? I don't know. Could Halley's Comet smash into us tomorrow? Sure. Anything's possible. The question is what's probable.

How do you respond to the criticism that the public hearings that have been held to discuss copper-nickel mining are just a dog and pony show? That people voice their concerns and nothing significant ever changes?

FO: Wow. I just think that's really inaccurate and unfair. We've got a comprehensive, thorough environmental review and regulatory process, and a significant part of that involves public comment and citizen input. That's extremely important for the people in the affected area and all over the state. Every stakeholder has an opportunity to submit their support and their concerns, and the regulatory agencies are listening and forming policy

accordingly. The PolyMet project, for example, is different today than it was when it was going through its original environmental review. The agencies and others said, “Hey, something's not looking right.” So the planners went back, they retooled, they redrew, and they came back with a revised proposal. And then there was a second round of hearings three years later. So the process, even though it takes way too much time, is working.



QUESTIONS FOR KEVIN LEE

There's a sense among mining advocates that no amount of regulation would satisfy the environmental movement. Are you against mining, no matter what?

KL: Our organization [MCEA] recognizes that mining is important to the state's economy and the national economy. We are also acutely aware of the need for minerals like copper and nickel. And it's true that certain people who identify themselves as anti-mining sometimes fail to acknowledge these realities. On the other hand, a lot of the pro-mining talking points suffer from a similar sort of willful blindness

regarding the risks posed by this industry. People have to acknowledge that the need for copper is not going away, and people have to acknowledge that getting that copper is very risky. Until that happens, the issue will continue to polarize people. Our position is simple: We don't have to accept bargain basement mining that puts communities at risk. We can be better than that.

Have the companies that are planning to mine in Minnesota shown a willingness to discuss dry stacking?

KL: No. They aren't considering it. And I would go so far as to say that it would address the vast majority of the concerns that we have for these facilities. But once these sorts of projects get under way, they get on greased wheels and no one is in the mood to slow down and reconsider their original plans. I mean, sure, we had public meetings for the environmental impact statement—where people line up to speak at a microphone, and they have their two minutes, and then they go home. It's not meaningful engagement. A real conversation with stakeholders would look a whole lot different than that.

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Let's truly be a world leader. Let's export safe technology rather than import unsafe mining.
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Can you give a very specific example relevant to copper-nickel extraction where Minnesota's regulations are too lenient?

KL: There are a number of states that, unlike Minnesota, specifically prohibit mining that requires perpetual water treatment, including Michigan, Maine, and New Mexico. If we were to use processes like filtered tailings [also called dry stacking], we could get as close as is humanly possible to eliminating the risk of water treatment. The tailings facility would become more like a landfill than anything else. You would treat the water and discharge it during

operations, and then what you'd be left with, basically, is slightly wet sand. It would have a smaller footprint because you're not talking about as much volume. Then you line the landfill at the bottom, put the tailings on top, and cap it. That's the best way that we have to eliminate the risk of water treatment. It requires a little bit more money up front. If you're looking at the lifetime of the mine, though, it's much cheaper.

Wouldn't it be better to mine in Minnesota, where workers are paid fairly and the environmental standards are more stringent, than in other countries around the world?

KL: I think it's very disingenuous to use that logic to try to push through financially and environmentally risky mines in Minnesota. And I don't think we should allow ourselves to be swayed by the argument that if we don't mine here we're going to be hurting kids in the Third World who are going to be poisoned. That's insulting. There's no connection. Those mines will stay open and do damage no

matter what we do here. Rather than use bad mining practices around the world as an excuse, let's take advantage of new technologies and do everything we can to behave responsibly. Let's refine things like filtered tailings to make them cheaper and more accessible for everyone. Let's truly be a world leader. Let's export safe technology rather than import unsafe mining.

Fool's Gold

To depend on copper-nickel mining to spur economic development is unsustainable and shortsighted

By Michelle Lee

In 1983, at the height of a recession, I took a job as a journalist in Duluth, Minnesota. The iron mines were idled—adding to the traumatic loss of 2,400 mining jobs a decade earlier—and area families were leaving to find work elsewhere.

A billboard sprang up on the western edge of the city featuring the now infamous phrase, “Will the last one leaving Duluth please turn off the light.” My news director at the CBS-affiliate KDLH-TV referred to the local economy as a three-legged stool held up by timber, tourism, and taconite. And taconite, the region's number one economic driver, was particularly unstable.

For more than a century, iron ore mining has sustained families on the Mesabi Iron Range and supported related industry in the port city of Duluth. The ore used to win two world wars was supplied out of the Mesabi, Vermillion, and Cuyuna Ranges. The communities that are strung across the ranges were established because of iron ore mining and grew with waves of immigrants whose labor powered the industry. They were the “rangers” who fought to form the unions that protect iron ore miners to this day.

The development of taconite, ability to recover additional iron materials from mining waste, and new methods of steelmaking are helping to extend the life of this important industry, which continues to provide economic security for hundreds of hardworking Northlanders and their families. Still, the accelerated development of iron ore mines in other countries, in concert with the globalization of the steel market, have resulted in a significant reduction in the number of mining jobs on the Range. What's more, mechanization and technology have allowed companies to produce more goods with less labor. In 1920, there were 20,000 iron miners, with 2,050 metric tons produced per worker. Today, there are approximately 4,000 miners, with 13,000 metric tons produced per worker.

Now comes the promise of 350 additional jobs from foreign-owned corporations whose records of environmental degradation and ill treatment of laborers is well documented. They propose to develop copper-nickel sulfide mining within the St. Louis River and Boundary Water Canoe Area Wilderness watersheds.

This is particularly concerning because—while iron ore mining and taconite production is a well-developed industry that's stood the test of time—sulfide mines, like those found on Michigan's Upper Peninsula, dependably and permanently pollute surrounding water with carcinogens and neurotoxins, which in turn destroys thousands of acres of land. Open-pit sulfide mines, like the one being pursued by the PolyMet Mining development company, would be no different. It will pollute a watershed that feeds our largest Great Lake, and promises to destroy thousands of highly valuable biodiversity sites and wetlands in Superior National Forest.

The risk—not to mention the investment in time, resources, and political capital—isn't worth it. Chances are good that the promised jobs don't take into account the ever-increasing automation of the

mining process. And, even if every single job materialized, they are tied to the twenty- to twenty-five-year-life of the mine, ensuring yet another economic bust.

To protect the environmental and economic health of the Arrowhead region, we Minnesotans need to expand our horizons and develop environmentally sustainable, economically stable industries that—in tandem with traditional forms of iron mining—can reinvigorate communities on the Range throughout the twenty-first century and beyond. We must invest in green energy technology, support farm-to-table production, and invest in the creation of small businesses that are already proving to be engines of economic growth.

The first step in the process would involve building out broadband and high-speed internet systems that connect our rural areas with the world. The current patchwork of state and federal grants isn't enough to cover all the regions left out in the cold. During the Great Depression, the Rural Electrification Act was created to serve our rural areas. This is a history lesson we need to embrace. Adequate broadband and high-speed networks open the doors to increased



We must invest in green energy technology, support farm-to-table production, and invest in the creation of small businesses.

educational access, telemedicine services, and business opportunities for those who prefer to live in small towns and rural areas.

Supporters of sulfide mining argue that we have the best regulations in the world and Minnesotans can get it right. There are no guarantees the regulation and future of the industry will be left up to local citizens, however. In Washington, D.C., essential rules and regulations can be and are being rolled back with the stroke of a pen. When the mines play out and the last profits are counted, it will be too late to reclaim our water and the millions of acres of natural environment where Minnesotans live, work, hunt, fish, and play.

Our pristine nature is itself a commodity with tremendous growth potential. Residents of and visitors to the Eighth District love the outdoors, spending \$1.88 billion a year on water sports, camping, and fishing. Sales of leisure and hospitality businesses grew 50 percent from 2004 to 2016. According to Explore Minnesota, tourism in the northeastern region of the state provides over 17,000 jobs and accounted for over \$933 million in gross sales in 2016. The resulting sales tax put nearly \$61 million in the state's coffers.

As we move forward together to build a diverse and thriving economy, we must do all we can to protect the Land of 10,000 Lakes, which is bordered by one of the largest freshwater lakes in the world—a “Superior” and precious resource in and of itself. And while some say everything has risk, I believe the hazards associated with the current copper-nickel sulfide mining proposals are too great. One misstep would burden generations to come. ❄️

Fuel for Recovery

Responsible copper-nickel mining is essential to Minnesota's economic future

By Nancy Norr

Minnesota has a rich iron mining history. For more than 130 years, generations of mining families in the northern part of the state have flourished and protected the environment. Just as areas of Minnesota with a rich agricultural heritage have prospered, northern Minnesota has as well, due to its abundance of natural resources. This tradition is something on which the state can continue to build as it enters a new era of copper-nickel mining, which promises widespread economic benefit.

Strategic metals, including copper, nickel, platinum, and palladium, were discovered in Minnesota more than seventy years ago, but development projects were not pursued due to the lack of economically viable and environmentally responsible extraction methods.

Today, new state-of-the-art mining technologies allow for the successful—and profitable—development of copper-nickel mining operations. This potential is particularly important to northeastern Minnesota, as communities in this region have been slower than the Twin Cities to recover from the Great Recession of 2007–2009, the worst economic decline since the Great Depression. As a result, a sustainable recovery took longer than it did in the wake of two previous downturns in the late twentieth century. Today, even though Minnesota fares well compared to other areas of the United States, the pains of this slow recovery are still being felt, especially outside of the Twin Cities.

In Greater Minnesota, low incomes and the vulnerability of the economy remain top concerns, according to a 2016 Blandin Foundation survey.

Keeping young people in rural communities remains a constant challenge due to the lack of well-compensated job opportunities. The American Community Survey found the median household income in the Twin Cities metro area was \$73,231 in 2016. In St. Louis County, that figure drops to \$49,395. In the city of Virginia, the median household income is just \$35,150—less than half of the median income in the Twin Cities.

The rural-urban economic disparity can cause geographic tensions and differences in opinion in how to chart our economic future. Some who live outside Minnesota mining communities might claim that because mining is antiquated, economically undepend-

able, or dangerous to the environment, it should not be allowed in the state. However, many Minnesotans, including those who have worked in the mining industry for decades, disagree. These workers, families, technical advisors, and service providers appreciate the economic values and traditions of the mining industry and they also revere the wilderness and depend on the existence of clean drinking water. They also choose to work and live in areas where hunting and fishing are convenient outdoor recreational activities.



Copper-nickel mining will not sacrifice the environment we all love. Robust state and federal regulatory processes, along with Minnesota's strong environmental protections and accountability measures, ensure that the industry can coexist with the wilderness and provide opportunities for families now and into the future.

The economic potential of copper-nickel mining is well studied. According to a 2012 study by the University of Minnesota—Duluth's Labovitz School of Business and Economics, for every job in the copper-nickel mining industry, two additional jobs will be
Continued on page 18

Back & Forth

QUESTIONS FOR MICHELLE LEE

What do you think is the biggest misconception regarding your position on copper-nickel mining?

ML: That I'm against jobs, that I'm against unions, and that I'm against industry north of Hinckley. I get it, though. People want and need jobs. They want and need good-paying jobs. And they want to support economy development so that they can live, work, and play in the northland. Now, I would

imagine that deep in their hearts and minds, they might be questioning whether copper-nickel sulfide mining is the answer. But mining has always been the way on the Iron Range. It's easier, and much less frightening, to go back to what we know and what has worked in the past.

The 350 jobs PolyMet says it will generate would be some of the highest-paying in the region. How does that factor into your criticism of copper-nickel mining? And what other industries could generate that sort of security?

ML: When considering unemployment and wages in Minnesota, I can't help but ask, do we have a shortage of workers or do we have a shortage of jobs? And what I am seeing, and what I am hearing, is that we have a shortage of trained workers. For at least twenty years, we've wanted our children to succeed in the future, so we pushed them into going to four-year colleges and beyond. Now a generation of young people is saddled with enormous debt and many of them can't find jobs in their chosen professions. When I travel the state I see "Help Wanted" signs for truck drivers, for welders, and for electricians. It's the trades that are desperate for workers. So I think that we have to start flipping that switch and telling our kids, "You know what, if you want to go to a vo-tech school, if you want to go into the trades, you have my blessing because you will have portable skills that you can take anywhere and there are jobs waiting." And as my generation continues to retire there will be even more.

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When I travel the state I see “Help Wanted” signs for truck drivers, for welders, and for electricians. It’s the trades that are desperate for workers.
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The emerging green economy needs copper to make wind turbines, nickel to produce solar panels, and platinum for catalytic converters. Why would we turn to other countries, which may be violating environmental laws and labor standards, for these materials?

ML: I think science will take us to a point someday where we may be able to extract these minerals here in the U.S. without jeopardizing our water, which is our most strategic national resource. I also think we could be working much harder to recycle metals. We throw away more copper in a year than the PolyMet mine could produce in twenty. In the

meantime, we have international laws against child labor. We need to be putting pressure on foreign governments and multinational companies to make sure those laws are followed and that we do not have children mining these metals. It's much like conflict diamonds or blood diamonds. When we know better, we do better.

Is investment in mining versus investment in other forms of economic development in the region a zero-sum game?

It doesn't have to be a zero-sum game. When it comes to iron ore mining, for instance, I think that we have the resources and the ingenuity to do both. But copper-nickel mining is different. Think about tourism: It's big business here in the northland. A lot of people have invested their futures into lake homes and they come up on weekends. And a lot of them want to retire here,

making those cabins their full-time homes. We have built and will build businesses and entire industries around serving that population. We can't jeopardize that with the promise of 200, 400, or even 1,000 jobs—especially if the industry that provides those jobs destroys the public lands and pristine beauty that people from all over the state love and cherish.



QUESTIONS FOR NANCY NORR

One could argue that the cyclical nature of mining has contributed to Greater Minnesota's economic woes over the past twenty years. How is copper-nickel mining any different?

NN: I think it's a fair point and worth debating. But where I think we differ with our opposition is that they don't see the nonferrous mining opportunity as being sufficiently diverse from our traditional iron mining activities. We can address some of

the industry's cyclical nature by appreciating differences in commodity pricing—you don't have the same level of competition with copper-nickel mining as you do with iron—as well as staying alert to both new markets and new products.

You argue that attracting young workers to the region and retaining them here is essential. Do you think mining can serve that purpose?

NN: I think there is a tradition of working within the natural resource-based development industries in this region that goes much broader than any specific job available in a copper-nickel mine. Part of the work I've been doing the last six years is to help these projects establish their social license in the region. And these projects have been put to the test. If local leaders didn't think these companies were capable of being good corporate citizens, they would not support them. As a mom of two kids in their twenties, I can also tell you that young people want to have great purpose, work for a responsible employer, and make a good living so they can enjoy living in a region they love. That's what will keep young people here in Greater Minnesota.

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Young people want to have great purpose, work for a responsible employer, and make a good living so they can enjoy living in a region they love.
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You write about the “economic values and traditions of mining.” Could you describe these traditions and values more specifically?

NN: [Aurora] Mayor Dave Lislegard talks about how “the history of the region is as deep as the minerals” under his feet. The iron produced in this region built America, it won the world wars. Now certain people in your readership, especially those who don't come from this culture, might think that's hokey. But it's no different from the pride a farmer has for helping to feed America. I also feel strongly that we no longer understand

where things come from. Many of the same people who oppose copper-nickel mining simultaneously support technologies that need these metals, like electric vehicles, wind turbines, and solar panels. We as a country are the highest consumer per capita of precious metals, and the fact that many are willing to import those metals from countries with lower environmental standards and public safety or child labor laws strikes me as incredibly elitist.

Given the rapidity of technological innovation, is it reasonable to assume the jobs created by these proposed mining projects will last for more than a few years, let alone a generation?

Automation, I think, is how we measure progress in our country. And it tends to elevate the quality of the jobs that remain and the pay involved. So you know, will it ever become “driverless-car” mining? I don't believe so. But I think technology will only enhance our ability to do these projects in

an environmentally responsible manner. It will also enhance our ability to mitigate and return land to the quality that we expect and demand once the mining is over, and to me it only improves the quality of life of those who are in the industry.

Too Dam Risky*Continued from page 11*

The dam collapses were the direct result of mining companies prioritizing production above all else, without giving due regard to the structural integrity of a dam that keeps climbing higher year after year.

These disasters have taught us that there are better ways of storing mine waste, such as dry storage, that would make dam failures a thing of the past. Many countries are rapidly moving to modernize their laws to require more sophisticated mining techniques and more robust monitoring, but Minnesota is lagging behind.

Some countries have outlawed risky practices like open-pit mining. Many others have made substantial improvements in the oversight of tailings dam designs by requiring designs and permits to be reviewed by an independent panel of mine engineers. Minnesota continues to rely primarily on the review of the Department of Natural Resources, a state agency that is also tasked with promoting mineral extraction.

The regulatory bodies that have direct experience with mine disasters, such as those in Montana and British Columbia, have begun implementing specific design standards for the structural integrity of tailings dams—what’s known among mine engineers as a “factor of safety.” Minnesota has no laws or regulations specific to the structural integrity of tailings dams at all. We treat these mine waste dams the same way that we treat any other dam that holds water, even though a tailings dam contains industrial waste.

Our state must act quickly to update our environmental and safety standards to bring us into the twenty-first century. New mines in Minnesota must use the best available practices and pollution control technologies used elsewhere around the world.

Mining’s legacy of contamination and loss is not inherent to mining itself; it is the result of an outdated, bargain-basement way of mining. Despite the oft-repeated platitudes about having the best environmental standards, the unfortunate truth is that Minnesota lags badly behind the rest of the world in working to ensure a safer, more responsible mining industry. 🌱



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Many countries are rapidly moving to modernize their laws to require more sophisticated mining techniques and more robust monitoring, but Minnesota is lagging behind.

Fuel for Recovery*Continued from page 15*

created in other industries, like manufacturing, retail, and hospitality.

Not only is the quantity of jobs generated from mining impressive, but so are the quality of those jobs. These are high-paying jobs that sustain families, offer benefits, ensure a secure retirement, and put kids through college. The average wage for a mining job in the United States in 2016 was just shy of \$74,000, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. This figure is 38 percent higher than the average wage for all other industries. In Minnesota, the earnings potential for a mining job is even higher—over \$77,000 in 2016 or 41 percent higher than the average annual wage for all other industries.

In addition to the high quantity and quality of mining jobs, copper-nickel mining offers enduring careers. It is not a boom-bust industry, as is too often suggested. In 1977, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources estimated that the Duluth Complex, the geological formation where companies are pursuing copper-nickel mining projects, holds more than four billion tons of ore containing copper, nickel, platinum, palladium, and gold. More than forty years later, research gathered by companies exploring the area for these valuable minerals suggests that resources are much greater, offering ample supply to support up to a century of mining.

Today we are highly dependent on foreign sources for the very metals that exist in abundance in Minnesota. Long-term, local access to these minerals translates to more independence for our nation’s economy and ensures that ethical standards for natural resource development are upheld. The emerging green economy needs minerals like copper to power wind turbines, nickel for stainless steel components in solar panels, and platinum for the catalytic converters in cars that convert pollutant gases into less harmful ones. Our nation’s dependence on imports to supply these critical industries means we are purchasing minerals from countries that may not have strong environmental standards or labor laws.

It is human nature to always strive for what is better. We want better jobs for our citizens and a better tomorrow for our children, which starts with high-quality public schools funded in part by mining royalties paid into the Minnesota Permanent School Trust Fund. New copper-nickel mining projects are estimated to generate \$3 billion for this fund, supporting the education of 900,000 students statewide.

Minnesota’s economic foundation includes mining. Our state’s strong economic future includes environmentally responsible copper-nickel mining. 🌱

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COUNTING on the Numbers People

A tax buff and a budget guru come out of retirement to help St. Paul's nonprofits and the city work together

By Amy Goetzman

Sometimes government is as plain as the snow on your street. Essential services—a catchall category that includes plowing, traffic lights, and boulevard maintenance, as well as police and fire—is one of local government's most visible and vital functions. Few people dispute that these services are central to making a city safe, inviting, and livable.

But who should pay the bill?

Beginning in 2002, all property owners shared the burden by paying a “right-of-way fee.” In 2016, though, the Minnesota Supreme Court ruled that churches, museums, hospitals, colleges, and other tax-exempt organizations could no longer be assessed that fee, deeming it a tax obscured only by name. In 2016, the right-of-way revenue totaled \$30.3 million, with \$4.5 million assessed on tax-exempt properties. The courts decided that nonprofits should continue to pay for street lighting and alley maintenance. But that still left \$1.8 million in services costs that could not be billed to those owners. Residential and for-profit businesses now make up the difference.

City leaders, facing objections by those property owners, were curious to know whether another strategy might enable nonprofits to help compensate for the services they receive. In the summer of 2017, with support from The Saint Paul & Minnesota Community Foundations, the Citizens League ran a nine-week study committee to find out.

Piloting the Study Committee

The Citizens League invited Kaye Rakow, former director of public policy for the Minnesota chapter of the Commercial Real Estate Development Association, and Joe Reid, former St. Paul budget director, to come out of retirement and cochair a committee to explore whether a PILOT, or “payment in lieu of taxes,” program might work for St. Paul. “At first, I didn’t understand why a committee was even needed. Why couldn’t the city just call up these property owners and talk to them?” recalls Rakow. At second glance, she quickly saw the complexities of the situation and was drawn to help.



Joe Reid and Kaye Rakow

Reid has a rich knowledge of the St. Paul budget from his years of service, and a vested interest as a resident of the city since 1970. “Once I saw who the committee members were, I felt pretty confident about it,” he says. “I understood that the Citizens League had worked hard to include many stakeholders and perspectives.”

Rakow and Reid had never met before, but they shared a background in numbers wizardry and committee work made them an effective team. For four months, the cochairs led a 23-person committee that included representatives from nonprofits and property owners, both commercial and residential. Former Citizens League executive director Sean Kershaw, Minnesota Center for Fiscal Excellence executive director Mark Haveman, and two research interns lent additional support.

Others, such as the St. Paul Federation of Teachers, observed the proceedings—en masse and in matching T-shirts.

In other cities, PILOT programs have been a way for nonprofits to contribute—symbolically, at least—to the budget that helps protect and maintain their real estate. It’s a delicate ask in any situation, of course, as some nonprofits are more able or willing to contribute than others. And in St. Paul specifically, the committee found, relationships between the city and its nonprofits had been somewhat strained. Municipal officials routinely fielded citizen concerns about nonprofits on a range of issues, including parking availability (or lack thereof) in residential neighborhoods and the presence of at-risk clients like the homeless, and general complaints from those who object to paying for services they might not personally use or value. At the same time, nonprofits routinely



For one thing, a much-repeated figure came into focus, and changed.

The committee had been told that a third of St. Paul's property was tax exempt, the highest percentage of any city in the state. In reality, when the committee analyzed the data, they found that 23.4 percent of the city's property belonged to nonprofits, which is similar to other larger cities in the state. In fact, Minneapolis has an even higher percentage (23.9).

Raw data didn't tell the whole story, however. The nonprofits on the committee explained that they already made contributions. Como Zoo, the Ordway, colleges, hospitals, parks, and other organizations do more than elevate St. Paul's cultural landscape; they generate economic activity or relieve taxpayers of certain burdens—even though it's difficult to assign a dollar value to these contributions.

"One of the colleges told us about all of the things they do for the community, outside of being a college, like tutoring school kids and supporting local businesses. Hospitals provide beds and shelter for the homeless, run feeding programs, take care of the mentally ill. 'If we did not do all of this, then who would?' they said. I quite frankly learned to appreciate it myself," Rakow says. "Maybe they weren't tooting their own horn enough. But then, it should be noted that many for-profit organizations *also* do a lot."

When the committee looked more closely at the budget, they discovered that a few nonprofits actually already made PILOT contributions. They found surprises in other cities as well. "Boston is known for having a successful program, but they only get 1.4 percent of their budget from PILOT. There are also administrative costs to running a PILOT program, and realistically, it might not be worth it. It's not a budget-solving solution," Rakow explains. "On the other hand, when it's midnight, every \$75,000 counts."

A Place to Start

At the end of the process, all stakeholders better understood the value nonprofits bring to St. Paul's civic life, as well as appreciated the city's budget realities. "The data we uncovered, from credible, reliable sources, is one of the biggest contributions our group made to the city," Rakow says. "We also helped generate new respect between all entities."

Reid agrees. "It's more difficult to com-

promise between different points of view than it was in the past. It's a challenge for all of us, in our families, church, and neighborhoods. People need to learn how to listen to one another, take care of each other, and respect each other again.

"For us, part of that came from the tone [Kershaw] set for the proceedings; right from the get-go, people understood that all viewpoints would be considered respectfully. It also helped just to get to know each other."

In fall 2017, the Citizens League's PILOT committee wrapped up its study with presen-



It's more difficult to compromise between different points of view than it was in the past. People need to learn how to listen to one another, take care of each other, and respect each other again."

tations to then mayor Chris Coleman and the St. Paul City Council. They shared the data the committee had gathered and then made recommendations. A PILOT program could not be counted on to completely solve the budget issues facing the city, the committee found. However, the city could still ask nonprofits to contribute something toward the services that benefit them and their clients. As a first step, though, the city must improve its relationships with its nonprofits. And then there was an election. "The new mayor and city council will have to address some difficult questions. I hope our committee's work helps with that," Reid says.

Mayor Melvin Carter has said that he is interested in a PILOT program for St. Paul. In the meantime, relationships between the city and its nonprofits continue to evolve, in large part, Reid concludes, because there's an understanding that their fates are entwined. "It's in the interest of the city that nonprofits are successful. But it's also in the interest of the nonprofits that the city is healthy." 🌸

Amy Goetzman is a writer and editor. Her work—which focuses on the arts, culture, technology, and environmental issues—appears in *MinnPost*, *Architecture MN*, and the *Star Tribune*.

felt underappreciated. Service organizations took issue with the notion that their budgets should be impacted by costs that weren't directly related to their mission or clients.

"They pointed out that their donors write a check expecting to support a particular program or initiative, not for sidewalk maintenance," Reid says. "A lot of institutions make a contribution to the city, but they call it a gift; it has to be voluntary."

The Numbers and Beyond

Each week, the committee presented data about St. Paul's real estate and budget. Nonprofits shared their perspectives. Outside experts, such as representatives from the City of Boston and the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, explained how other cities have faced the same conundrum. Seeing numbers brought new clarity.

Interview By David Schimke

OUR Patchwork Nation

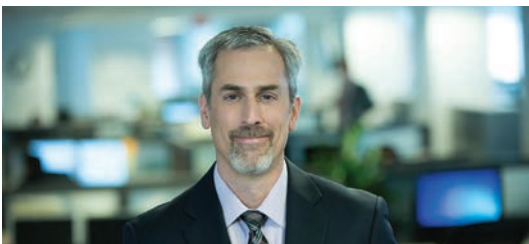
Journalist Dante Chinni on the nation's political differences, the divisive nature of easy ideological labels, and the need for nuanced data

ON THE EVE of the 2008 election, reporter Dante Chinni began searching for ways that he could combine statistics and anecdotal storytelling to describe the America he'd seen struggling and striving. Marveling at the country's coast-to-coast diversity, he was particularly keen to transcend the media's habit of coloring swaths of the republic red or blue, which does little in the way of explaining behavior but does conjure up frustratingly simplistic and polarizing stereotypes.

A "journalist not a statistician," Chinni says he sought out a research partner and found that a tendency toward overgeneralization also plagues academe, where the study of voting patterns often fails to transcend party polling. Then he met James Gimpel, a professor of government at the University of Maryland who was interested in developing a deeper data set.

Ultimately, the two created twelve demographic designations—College Towns, Evangelical Hubs, Military Posts, etc.—based on a variety of factors including age, race, religion, income, education, occupation, population density, available employment, and rates of consumer spending. The resulting book, *Our Patchwork Nation: The Surprising Truth About the "Real" America*, compares and contrasts facts and figures from the country's over 3,100 counties (not its voting districts, which is more typical) to unearth unlikely similarities and nuanced differences that defy coarse dichotomies, like black and white, urban and rural. The outcome, writes broadcast journalist Ray Suarez in the book's foreword, is "an appealing, versatile, and rich analytical tool for taking the country's economic, political, and social temperature."

The exercise proved prophetic. In the two elections since, the divide between Republicans and Democrats has deepened just as the explanation for that divide has become increasingly divisive. Concurrently, Chinni refined his approach under the auspices of the American Communities Project (americancommunities.org), which is housed at George Washington University and partnered with the *Wall Street Journal*, where Chinni works with the political team, and NBC News, where he provides analysis for *Meet the Press*. In early July, the 49-year-old, who also serves as ACP's director, talked about the categories he and Gimpel pioneered (there are now 15) and why he still believes Americans can come together to solve their common and uncommon problems.



Dante Chinni

DAVID SCHIMKE: What motivated you to begin this work?

Dante Chinni: The thing that I found when I traveled around the country is that you can't look at the U.S. using aggregate numbers and averages, and hope to understand what's going on. It's just too

“To make sense of the country it helps to break it into its pieces, find the similarities and differences from place to place, and then organize those pieces in different ways.”



complicated. On the other hand, it's too easy to just say that every place is different because, yeah, of course every place is different. But that doesn't mean you can just throw up your hands and say that every place is so unique that we can't categorize it or make sense of certain trends. To make sense of the country it helps to break it into its pieces, find the similarities and differences from place to place, and then organize those pieces in different ways so that you can see how everything works.

DS: The predominant political narrative is that we're split between red and blue states. Why not stick to that basic breakdown?

DC: We have two majority parties and labels like red and blue are a way to keep score. Beyond that, those labels don't really tell you much. Especially because the definition of what it is to be a Democrat or Republican continues to evolve. The Republican Party is going through a lot of turmoil and upheaval right now. And I think the Democrats also have a re-alignment on the way. So the red/blue map is even less revealing. Think of it this way: If you give somebody a few choices and a bunch of people choose choice A and a bunch of people choose B, it might tell you something rudimentary about them. But it certainly doesn't tell you *why* they made their choice. I'm not saying that what we do at the American Communities Project always tells you the reasons people make certain choices, but our categories are designed to at least begin exploring those reasons in more detail.

DS: There's also been a lot written about the rural-urban divide. What are the limitations of those labels?

DC: There's a lot of polling data available that looks at rural, urban, and suburban breakdowns. That makes sense on some level, because it's a way to look at population density. So a term like urban can tell you something, but it depends on definitions: When does something urban become suburban? When does something suburban become rural? There's a lot of gradation within those three types. Things get more complicated when you start looking at what drives a local economy or the differences in a community's racial composition or median age. In a lot of cases, these things end up becoming hugely important. For example, there are

rural places in the south that vote Democrat and some other communities—which on first glance look exactly the same—that vote Republican. Why is that? There needs to be a way to make more granular distinctions.

DS: What if we don't make those more granular distinctions? What's the real harm?

DC: Political parties take advantage of these broad, unsophisticated labels for propaganda purposes, which is disappointing. Both because it creates an “us versus them” mentality and because it robs of us nuance. Instead of seeing the country as a complex entity, we adopt a sports mentality: my team versus your team. And that makes us susceptible to overly simplistic answers to complex questions.

DS: On the American Communities Project map, much of Greater Minnesota is either categorized as Rural Middle American or Working Class Country. What are some of the differences between the two?

DC: Rural Middle America is not super-rural. These aren't tiny places. They tend to have a few more people in them. Rural Middle America also tends to be a bit more diverse, with slightly higher income and slightly higher education rates. Working Class Country looks more like what we might stereotypically think of as Appalachian. It's very white, has a lower education rate, and is slightly lower income. Now, both categories tend to be a bit less densely populated and sparse overall, but looking at the Minnesota map way up north really proves interesting. So, I think the reason that St. Louis County is Rural Middle America and not Working Class Country is that it contains Duluth. That's probably also the case with Carlton County, where there's enough overflow from Duluth. In both cases, the population is a bit more concentrated and diverse.

DS: If you replace our broader labels with your more specific categorizations, people are still going to disagree, aren't they? Won't we still be divided?

DC: Democrats and Republicans both have this problem where the other side looks like aliens to them. To begin with, we need to understand why people want or don't want very particular things. And for that to happen, we have to both start asking better questions of one another, and listen closely to the answers. For

can still happen in this country. That's the heart of our project.

DS: As the midterms approach, what's one way the average person can begin to get a better appreciation for life outside their own categorical bubble?

DC: Well, I do think you can consume information from sources popular with those with whom you disagree. And, hey, don't stop following people on social media because you disagree with them. I



instance, there are different reasons people feel a certain way about immigration reform. Some people might want to ease restrictions, while others might want to build a wall.

Now, I'm not saying that if someone gets a chance to provide a more nuanced explanation of what they think, everyone is going to suddenly agree on the causes and solutions to complex issues. Because a lot of time people believe what they believe for decent reasons. But if I understand why X, Y, and Z is important to you, and you can begin to see why I need A, B, and C, then maybe we can both see a way to give each other a little bit more of what we each want. I really believe that

know that's hard, because you're probably going to see deeply disturbing things from people you, quote-unquote, “thought you knew.” But instead of being disturbed, try to look at it and try to understand it. And sometimes, it simply helps to get a more colloquial view of things. If you live in a large city and want to have a better feel for a rural issue, like soybean tariffs, hop online and read a paper like the *Des Moines Register*. We live in different worlds from one another, and unless we get a chance to see those worlds through various lenses, we aren't going to understand or care. 🌟

DAVID SCHIMKE is the founding editor of *Citizens League Voice*. editor@citizensleague.org



(L to R) Kathleen Blatz, Sean Kershaw, Marilyn Carlson Nelson



Alan Page (center) and Diane Sims Page (right) meet with attendees of the 2015 Civic Celebration



(L to R) Wanda Kirkpatrick (attendee), Josie Johnson (honoree), Jearlyn Steele (attendee)

Moved to Speak

At the annual Civic Celebration, hundreds of Minnesotans celebrate changemakers from across the political spectrum

BY CITIZENS LEAGUE STAFF

At its annual Civic Celebration each year, the Citizens League pays tribute to leaders who have made noteworthy contributions to Minnesota’s civic life. In 2017, the honorees included a legendary civil-rights activist and a transgender trailblazer.

Josie Johnson bore witness to key moments in the struggle for equal rights when she traveled to Mississippi with an integrated group of women in 1964. Inspired, she returned to Minnesota to become a community organizer, and she ultimately served as acting director of the Minneapolis Urban League, the first African American regent at the University of Minnesota, and associate vice president for academic affairs at the University of Minnesota.

Susan Kimberly served as president of the St. Paul City Council in the 1970s as Robert Sylvester. She transitioned from male to female in the early 1980s, and in 1998 St. Paul mayor Norm Coleman appointed her deputy mayor—the first transgender person in America to hold that position. She later served as vice president of economic development for the St. Paul Chamber of Commerce and, as a highly

visible Republican, spoke in favor of marriage equality from the perspective of limited government.

A short video recounted the women’s contributions at the Civic Celebration, and toward the end, Kimberly looks at the camera and says, “The question is, Who’s going to come along next with integrity and vision? It’s going to be fascinating to see where it comes [from], but without vision and integrity, this whole thing doesn’t fly.”

Kimberly’s question is personal for the hundreds of people from across the political spectrum who gather each year for the Civic Celebration. The evening is not only about recognizing the amazing deeds of the honorees, it’s about celebrating a new generation of leaders, who are on a path to transforming their own communities.

Coleman, who worked closely with Kimberly during his time as mayor, noted her influence: “I think folks don’t understand the impact that they’ve had on others. I’ve talked about courage. I have no doubt that Susan Kimberly inspired other people to be more courageous.”

Minneapolis Police Chief Medaria

Arradondo recognized Johnson for helping people of color break social barriers. Shawntera Hardy, commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, counted both women as mentors.

“I stand here today because Susan and Josie calculated the risk and made the decision to invest, seen and unseen, in me, in our communities, and in our collective future,” said Hardy. “You both have made it abundantly clear that you don’t make progress by standing on the sidelines.”

Other past honorees include former U.S. Representative Don Fraser, former Minnesota Governor Al Quie, and retired Minnesota Supreme Court Justice Alan Page. The 2018 Civic Celebration, which will take place on October 11, will honor Richard Davis, former president, CEO, and executive chairman of U.S. Bank, for his business and community leadership in Minnesota. Register at <https://citizensleague.org/Events/civic-celebration/> and join the Citizens League—and a few hundred of your fellow Minnesotans—to catch up with old friends, meet new people, and recognize the lasting impact visionary leadership has on the community. 🌟

SUMMER 2018

JULY

- 17 **MIND OPENER: Breakfast**
Downtowner Woodfire Grill, St. Paul, 7:30 a.m.

AUGUST

- 21 **MIND OPENER: Breakfast**
Downtowner Woodfire Grill, St. Paul, 7:30 a.m.

SEPTEMBER

- 18 **MIND OPENER: Breakfast**
Downtowner Woodfire Grill, St. Paul, 7:30 a.m.

OCTOBER

- 11 **CIVIC CELEBRATION:**
Honoring Richard Davis, former president, CEO, and executive chairman of U.S. Bank
Minneapolis Event Centers, 5:30 p.m.



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October 11, 2018

5:30-8:00 p.m.

Minneapolis Event Center

Sponsorship opportunities and tickets at: CivicCelebration.org



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Pat and Wendy Born

