



# JOURNAL

A Public Policy Monthly from the Citizens League



## Testing the benefits of instant runoff voting without testing the state's constitution

Including candidate ranking in public opinion polls could bring more civility to electoral campaigns

by Paul Gilje

Voters are clearly fed up with negative campaigning and many aren't looking forward to the next nine months and the expected onslaught of campaign attacks. Many candidates and campaign strategists are fed up with these tactics as well, but argue they have no choice but to "go negative" to fend off attacks from the other side; furthermore, they say, negative campaigning works.

Rather than just complain about it, however, maybe there's something that can be done now to change the tenor of the debate, without jeopardizing candidates constitutionally protected free speech.

The Civic Caucus, a Minnesota-based, nonpartisan, nonprofit, educational organization has come up with an idea that could reward candidates for representing their positions in a positive way—instead of attacking their opponents—in campaign ads, speeches, and debates.

The idea emerged as Civic Caucus participants began exploring the issues around instant runoff voting (IRV), an alternative balloting system that allows voters to rank candidates in a race in order of preference. When the votes are counted, if no candidate receives a majority, the ballots are recounted and the last-place candidate's votes are allocated according to those voters' second choice. The process continues until one candidate receives a majority of the vote.

Proponents of IRV argue that candidates facing instant runoff voting might be less inclined to attack their opponents, knowing that in order to get elected they need to attract support from voters whose first choice is another candidate.

Voters in Minneapolis approved the adoption of

instant runoff voting in 2006. It could be in use there by 2009. But last December, a citizen's group filed a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of IRV in Hennepin County District Court. The group is arguing that IRV is so complicated it undermines the right to vote.

But there are already many opportunities to acquaint citizens with instant runoff voting—without addressing constitutional or legislative questions—simply through informal, non-binding straw votes. Political polling probably represents the most reliable, and potentially the most helpful, non-binding opportunity to see instant runoff voting in action.

If, during the current campaign, pollsters began asking for and reporting voters' second and third choices, candidates might moderate their positions in an effort to attract a broader spectrum of voters. Such a step would help illustrate a candidate's breadth of support throughout the electorate—not just depth of support from a candidate's ardent followers.



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# CONNECTIONS

Building a League of Citizens



In December 2006, Anthony Williams, the author of *Wikinomics: How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything*, spoke at an event co-sponsored by the Citizens League, Hennepin County, the Center for Science, Technology and Public Policy, and the Digital Technology Center. Do you have ideas for how we can use mass collaboration to do the common good? Go to [www.map150.org/weblog](http://www.map150.org/weblog) to read more about the event and offer your ideas.

## Citizens League Youth Action Groups

Last spring, the Citizens League rallied young people looking to get involved in their community into two action groups. The Citizens League provided training on organizing skills and funding to complete the projects (thanks to a generous grant from Comcast). Here's what the groups are doing:

**Energy and the Environment Action Group:** The group wanted to make a difference in the environment in their community and educate the younger generation of Minnesotans in the process. This spring they will be working with elementary school classes to build rain gardens in Minneapolis. Rain gardens collect rain water from roads, sidewalks, and roofs so pollutants are filtered through the ground rather than running directly into our lakes, streams, and rivers. Each rain garden is small, but collectively they produce substantial neighborhood and regional environmental benefits—and the construction process is a great hands-on learning experience for school children.

**Public Leadership Action Group:** Though most nonprofits value the contributions they receive from all volunteers, members of the public leadership action group knew from personal experience that it can be difficult to find substantive volunteer opportunities. So the group is organizing Connect for a Cause on February 11, a volunteer speed-matching event to bring together area nonprofits with young leaders looking to contribute. In the speed-matching portion of the event, participating organizations will have only three minutes to impress potential volunteers before finding out if they will be asked on a second "date." A more informal social hour will follow the speed-match, so that participants can get to know the organizations—and each other—better. To find out more about the event or sign up to attend either part, go to [www.citizensleague.org](http://www.citizensleague.org).

## New members, recruiters, and volunteers

### New Members

Abdi Ali  
Angela Althoff  
J. Edward Anderson  
Yende Anderson  
Carla Bates  
Seth Benziger  
Ann Berget  
John Berns  
Erika Binger  
Bruce Blumenthal  
Lindley and Constance Branson  
Amy Brendmoen and Jeff Neske  
Robert Burgett  
Paul Buschmann  
Linda Camp  
Michael Caputo  
Alex Carey  
Gail Cederberg  
Beth Cieslik  
Rob Clark  
Walter E. Cooney  
John G. Ida Davies  
Kari Davis  
Aimee Dayhoff  
Gail Dorfman  
Katrin Erdmann and Matthew Anderson  
Sally and Jack Evert  
Jeff Falk  
Janice S. Fitzgerald and David R. Davis  
Peter Fleck  
Deb Flemming  
Steven S. Foldes and Riv-Ellen Prell  
William E. Frenzel  
Darrell Gerber and Ashley James  
Mark Giga  
Elizabeth Glidden and Eric Pusey  
Richard J. Graham and Patricia Powers  
Bill Gray and Micki Rosauer  
Tiffany Green  
Tom Hagen  
Rick Hanson  
JaPaul Harris  
Mohamed Hassan  
Mike Hendrickson  
Mary Ann Hennen  
Nick and Christine Hensgens  
Mario Hernandez  
Ann Jaede  
Carla Johnson  
Julie Johnson  
Mike Jungbauer

John Keller  
David and Margaret Anderson Kelliher  
Jeremy Kovash  
Heidi Kraemer  
Neng Lee  
Nan P. Lightner  
Ronna Linroth  
Ted Ludwig  
Wilbur Maki  
Tom Margo  
Denise Mayotte  
James and Stephanie McCarthy  
Tim McDonald  
Daniel J. and Patricia S. McInerney  
Hella Mears  
Christina Melloh and Michael T. Kach  
Frank Merriman  
Tiffany Mulvihill  
Burton and Juletta Nygren  
Wayne H. Olson  
Alec and Janice Olson  
Kevin Olson  
Britta and Christopher Orr  
Lawrence M. O'Shaughnessy  
Nan Owen and John Lavander  
David and Valerie Halverson Pace  
Beverly Propes  
Jamie Proulx  
Kirk Pumphrey  
Natarajan Rama  
Daniel and Christine Rice  
Kenneth Ries  
Brigid Riley  
Polly Roach  
John A. and Beverly J. Rollwagen  
Ben and Robin Schein  
James W. and Jean Scheu  
James Schoettler  
Kristen Schroeder and Megan Gluth  
Penny Schumacher  
Judy Schwartzau  
Avni Shridharani  
Erika Sitz  
Mary L. Smith  
Bruce D. Snyder  
Carol Thatcher  
Julisa Viveros  
Amy Weldon  
Paige Winebarger  
Kelly Wolfe  
Paul Zerby

### Firms and Organizations

ADC Foundation  
Advance Consulting LLC  
Barr Engineering Company  
Becker Consulting  
Bush Foundation  
Center of Excellence for Women, Economic Justice and Public Policy  
City of Bloomington  
Coldwell Banker Burnet  
Community Reinvestment Fund, Inc.  
The Dorsey & Whitney Foundation  
Ecolab  
Faribault Foods Inc.  
Grassroots Solutions  
HealthPartners  
Himle Horner Incorporated  
KeyStone Search  
LarsonAllen LLP  
Lifeworks Services  
Lindsey Alexander Consulting  
M.A. Mortenson Company  
McKnight Foundation  
Metropolitan Library Service Agency  
Metropolitan Sports Facilities Commission  
Minnesota Business Partnership  
Minnesota Commission Serving Deaf and Hard of Hearing People  
Minnesota Private College Council  
North Central Mineral Ventures  
Portico Healthnet  
The Rodman Foundation  
Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce  
Saint Paul Public Housing Agency  
Sherburne & Wadleigh Ltd  
Steppingstone Consulting, Inc.  
Travelers Foundation

### Recruiters

Stan Donnelly  
Kate Lundeen  
Mary Pickard  
Nena and Aaron Street  
Tom Teigen  
Diane Tran

### Volunteers

Janna Caywood  
Cal Clark  
Kelsey Johnson  
Christopher Orr



## When long-term care becomes *wrong-term care*

We need a new civic and intergenerational approach to aging

by Sean Kershaw

In the movie *Moonstruck*, Olympia Dukakis' character Rose Castorini cautions her philandering husband Cosmo: "I just want you to know that, no matter what you do, you are going to die just like everyone else."

Sometimes the first step to solving a problem is admitting that there is a problem.

But Cosmo's reply is equally revealing. He says, simply, "Thank you, Rose."

Sometimes acknowledging the problem isn't enough.

We have created a system that citizens and consumers fear and don't *want*.

We have a problem with our system of long-term care and aging services in Minnesota, and, much like Cosmo, we don't seem to want to talk about it.

Our system of long-term care is perhaps second only to the nuclear power industry in terms of regulation. It's dominated by government and service-based nonprofits. Its workers are underpaid and culturally isolated from the people they serve. The system encourages families to abdicate their role in care and frustrates those who don't want to. It's economically unsustainable for the operators and for taxpayers. Its complexity confuses and frustrates the wonkiest among us.

And perhaps most telling, we have created a system that citizens and consumers fear and don't *want*. Frankly, it's a credit to the over-worked people in the system that it isn't in more of a crisis.

It is not enough to say that the current system needs dramatic changes. We have to redefine aging and reinvent the politics of how we address its challenges and opportunities. The good news is that our impending long-term care crisis offers Minnesotans an opportunity to develop new intergenerational and entrepreneurial

solutions. And the Citizens League's civic approach to policy making, and the insights we are learning through our Minnesota Anniversary Project (MAP 150), give us a unique vantage point from which to envision more sustainable solutions.

### Redefining the problem

The term "long-term care" is revealing. Long-term care is usually about long-term loss: the loss of authority, money, health, and connections to family and community. Our system is based on an expert and medical model of passive consumption and limited choices. And because none of us really want this, we avoid talking about it or planning for it.

We need to begin an intergenerational discussion to redefine the issue in radically new—civic—terms.

We should talk about how we all age, not just about "the elderly"; about harnessing wisdom and building individual capacity, not just providing more/better services and care. We should talk about health and wellness, not just chronic illness; about taking personal responsibility for our retirement and for the economic health of future generations, not just how we pay the bills for the current troubled system.

### Redefining solutions

The problems plaguing our long-term care system are becoming more acute as the "silver tsunami," the impending retirement of the baby boom generation, comes crashing toward our civic and political shores. It is time to admit that, just like public education, our long-term care system was not designed to address our current and future realities.

But it isn't enough to define the problem differently or simply to present a better ideal or model; we need the capacity to change. We need better political and policy solutions. Our current approach is on course to require younger generations to sacrifice to provide more services for baby boomers and older generations in this failing system. This won't—and shouldn't—work.

So what would a new civic political and policy strategy look like? I don't know the answer but I can begin to see how we can shape a better process to find better answers.

We need to ask stakeholders from all generations and all sectors both what they expect and want, and what they would be willing to contribute to create better solutions as families and individuals. We're learning through MAP 150 that citizen motivations matter, and that citizens are willing to make better decisions given the opportunity and the information to do so.

We also need all institutions to play a role: employers and community organizations as well as government and nonprofit service providers. We need systemic policies that expect wellness, encourage delayed gratification, recognize and reward family obligation, and facilitate connections to neighborhoods, families, and home-based care. We should start small—with what we are all able to do in the places we spend time—rather than by reinventing another huge hierarchical government program.

### Intergenerational connections

Later in *Moonstruck*, when Cosmo complains that his life is "built on nothing," Rose finally breaks through to him when she reminds him of his connections to her and his family that span their differences and their distances. Cosmo ultimately changes not because he knows he will die, but because he knows he is connected to the very alive people around him.

As we watch this silver tsunami begin to break on our shores, we can choose to stay isolated and locked in fear, unable to change or even acknowledge our problems. Or we can view this policy challenge as a new civic opportunity to build and express our connections to each other, and to current and future generations of Minnesotans. ●

Sean Kershaw is the Executive Director of the Citizens League. He can be reached at [skershaw@citizensleague.org](mailto:skershaw@citizensleague.org). You can comment on this Viewpoint at [www.citizensleague.org/blogs/sean](http://www.citizensleague.org/blogs/sean)

# Meet the Civic Caucus

This group of public policy enthusiasts works to promote good governance and preserve our representative democracy

by Paul Gilje

Minnesota's governmental and political structure is threatened by excessive polarization among contending interests, and the result is inaction on urgent problems. Disturbingly, many voters also have become increasingly cynical about whether they should bother to participate in political parties or vote, leaving ever more influence to strident advocates for one special interest or another. Left unchecked, such developments threaten the very future of representative democracy.

chair, Verne C. Johnson, remains the chair today. Johnson is a former executive director and board chair of the Citizens League, and a former vice president for corporate planning for General Mills, Inc.

Historically, the Civic Caucus has been made up primarily of persons with long-term experience or involvement with government and public affairs. Among the core members there are several other former Citizen League leaders and staff, including Charles Clay, James Hetland, Jr., John

government structure and threats to representative democracy.

Periodically, the core group drafts position papers and then circulates them for comment. Once a draft has been commented on and revised, it is approved by the core group and participants are invited to sign on in support.

Over the last five years the Civic Caucus has issued seven position papers on topics as varied as metropolitan transportation policy and U.S. policy in the Middle East, and conducted interviews with about 90 thought leaders, including minority and majority leaders in the Minnesota House and Senate, former governors, and members of Congress.

Position papers and summaries of interviews are available without charge at [www.civiccaucus.org](http://www.civiccaucus.org).

## Priority initiatives

The Civic Caucus has agreed to focus on a number of priorities issues in the coming months, including:

- Helping to restore Minnesota's past leadership in governmental and political affairs by finding ways to reduce excessive polarization among lawmakers and encouraging statesmanship before partisanship.
- Strengthening the Minnesota elections system to achieve broader citizen influence and participation across the political

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The Civic Caucus is dedicated to drawing attention to these issues and helping to restore Minnesota's past leadership in governmental and political affairs.

In the fall of 2007, the Citizens League and the Civic Caucus began exploring how the two organizations might work together. Both are Twin Cities based, non-partisan, and committed to educating people about, and seeking innovative solutions to public policy questions.

The organizations also share some history. Several core participants in the Civic Caucus are former Citizens League presidents and staff members. But the organizations differ somewhat in their missions.

The Citizens League is by far larger and better known of the two, with a distinguished record extending back more than 50 years. The Citizens League has undertaken special efforts to bring new voices into policy-making.

The Civic Caucus began as a small, informal discussion group in 1950. Its original

Mooty, Wayne Popham, John Rollwagen, Clarence Shallbetter, and Paul Gilje. Former Congressman Bill Frenzel is also a core participant.

But the organization is growing and changing. During the past five years, the Civic Caucus incorporated as a nonprofit and expanded its number from about a dozen participants to more than 725. The Civic Caucus and the Citizens League now exchange membership lists and are working on other cooperative efforts.

The mission of the Civic Caucus is to provide participants with in-depth information and commentary on public affairs online and by email once a week or so. A core group conducts probing interviews with public figures, develops summaries of those interviews and shares them with other Civic Caucus participants via email, who are then invited to comment. The interviews are typically conducted in a "Meet the Press" format and are highly focused, mainly on issues dealing with

### The Civic Caucus uses a unique process to gather and disseminate information on public affairs:

- Open participation without charge
- Identification of key issues
- Close questioning of thought leaders
- Thorough and understandable summaries
- Widespread circulation of summaries among participants
- Extensive feedback from participants
- Hard-hitting recommendations
- Invites participants to sign on in support

spectrum, thereby assuring more attention to moderate, not just more extreme, viewpoints.

- Supporting efforts to improve media coverage of public affairs, thereby adjusting to the irreversible decline in newspapers.
- Inviting other groups, including the Citizens League, to consider adopting elements of the Civic Caucus approach for themselves.

## Emphasis on education

Historically, the Civic Caucus has stressed that its primary task is to advance innovative proposals to solve tough public policy questions. In the past, the Civic Caucus has measured its impact by the extent its proposals were enacted. That function continues. However, over the last two years, core Civic Caucus participants have come to recognize more than ever before that real impact occurs when large numbers of citizens are thoroughly informed and given opportunities to have their thoughts considered.

The core Civic Caucus now views the organization's primary task as gathering

information, organizing it in an easy-to-understand format, sharing it with as many citizens as possible, and encouraging

Civic Caucus participants, many of whom are quite active in other organizations or initiatives, often pass on Civic Caucus

Caucus participants have come to recognize more than ever before that real impact occurs when large numbers of citizens are thoroughly informed and given opportunities to have their thoughts considered.

them to provide feedback. Ultimately, the Civic Caucus hopes its specific proposals are enacted, but true impact occurs with broad involvement.

Because education and involvement are so important, the Civic Caucus' distribution list includes state legislators and statewide elected officials. Many lawmakers offer their own comments. It's not just their responses that are important, however, it's the fact that they, too, are gaining information via the summaries and other mailings.

information to others—with the a click a mouse—significantly enlarging the Civic Caucus audience.

The organization has no dues or membership requirements and it's not necessary to attend meetings to be active in the Civic Caucus. Anyone can join by send an email to [civiccaucus@comcast.net](mailto:civiccaucus@comcast.net). For more information, or for copies of Civic Caucus reports, visit the website at [www.civiccaucus.org](http://www.civiccaucus.org).

## Runoff voting

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There are other advantages as well:

- Political organizations might be more inclined to enlist and endorse candidates who take the high road.
- Many respondents to political polls don't favor one candidate to the exclusion of all others. They see good and bad in many of them. Particularly early in the campaign, respondents might appreciate the chance to indicate degrees of support for more than one candidate.
- Pollsters could paint a more accurate picture of a race at any moment in time. It's one thing to show, for example, that a leading candidate has 35 percent of voters' support. It's quite another thing to illustrate who might be a "consensus" candidate—the candidate with unofficial majority support when voters' second and third choices are considered. The results could be vastly different.



While there is no guarantee IRV-style candidate ranking in political polls would reduce negative campaigning, if the practices

became widespread, candidates would have some incentive to try to remain in the good graces of a broader segment of the electorate. They might think twice before stridently attacking someone else.

Pollsters have a variety of options available for weighing voters' first, second, and third choices, including the specific steps used in instant runoff voting. There are also other opportunities to use IRV-style candidate ranking without changing the state's election laws, at precinct caucuses and party conventions, for example, or in any straw poll. ●

Paul Gilje is a member of the Citizens League and served as research director and associate director of the Citizens League from 1964 to 1988. Now semi-retired, he serves as coordinator for the Civic Caucus.



# Moving beyond TIF

## Property tax subsidies for economic development

By Bob DeBoer

Subsidizing economic development with property taxes is a well-established tradition in Minnesota—particularly the use of tax increment financing (TIF). But now two other sources are solidly in use: Job Opportunity Building Zones (JOBZ) and property tax abatements.

JOBZ is a rural economic stimulus program that exempts a variety of taxes on developments in outside the seven-county metro area. In its third year, JOBZ exempted nearly \$4 million in net tax capacity on property throughout Greater Minnesota.

Property tax abatements are also used to permanently forgive or temporarily defer property taxes owed by particular properties. The use of property tax abatements, which the state more broadly authorized in 1997, is generally considered to be growing, although abatement amounts are not reported to the state.

Although the level and use of property tax abatement is unknown, it is still probable that TIF is far and away the largest property tax subsidy in use in Minnesota. The purpose of TIF is to help subsidize the cost of redeveloping blighted areas, and to spur the creation of economic development and jobs, and affordable housing.

Tax increment financing enables a city or town to “capture” the additional property taxes generated by the new development and use the “tax increment” to pay some of the development costs. (See sidebar for a fuller explanation of TIF and its uses.)

In the Citizens League’s annual survey of tax increment financing use this year, we have combined data from TIF and from JOBZ to provide a more accurate picture of the use of property tax subsidies across the state (see Table 1).

The percent of total tax capacity used to subsidize economic development is an important indicator because it tells us how much of the tax base is currently not paying property taxes for general services. It is important to know which communities are the biggest users of TIF so residents can assess the needs of their communities and can decide whether they think more or less property tax subsidy is needed for economic development.

The Citizens League urges the Department of Revenue to start collecting abatement data,

**Table 1: TIF and JOBZ tax capacity by county**

County	Net Tax Capacity	Rank	TIF Tax Capacity	Rank	% TIF of Total Tax Cap.	% TIF of Tax Cap. Rank	JOBZ Tax Cap.	TIF and JOBZ Tax Capacity	Rank	% TIF & JOBZ of Total Tax Cap.	% TIF & JOBZ TC Rank
AITKIN	23,490,243	39	177,437	53	0.76%	64	14,480	191,917	55	0.82%	65
ANOKA	336,349,347	4	20,352,870	4	6.05%	3	0	20,352,870	4	6.05%	4
BECKER	33,276,557	25	554,473	27	1.67%	33	19,546	574,019	29	1.72%	39
BELTRAMI	25,976,754	36	310,608	41	1.20%	49	0	310,608	45	1.20%	54
BENTON	28,353,841	30	1,111,309	20	3.92%	10	76,528	1,187,837	20	4.19%	10
BIG STONE	4,828,562	84	0	83	0.00%	82	0	0	84	0.00%	84
BLUE EARTH	57,681,596	15	1,812,936	13	3.14%	12	148,712	1,961,648	12	3.40%	13
BROWN	20,154,949	45	481,129	31	2.39%	25	82,798	563,927	30	2.80%	18
CARLTON	24,408,449	38	107,688	64	0.44%	70	0	107,688	65	0.44%	72
CARVER	109,094,828	11	5,854,430	7	5.37%	5	0	5,854,430	7	5.37%	5
CASS	54,551,740	18	270,596	45	0.50%	69	41,038	311,634	44	0.57%	69
CHIPPEWA	11,263,926	63	116,167	63	1.03%	55	187,095	303,262	46	2.69%	21
CHISAGO	51,633,580	19	1,243,752	19	2.41%	24	209,796	1,453,548	18	2.82%	17
CLAY	33,564,359	24	982,948	21	2.93%	15	113,409	1,096,357	21	3.27%	15
CLEARWATER	6,293,509	80	0	83	0.00%	82	12,066	12,066	80	0.19%	81
COOK	13,964,061	56	0	83	0.00%	82	0	0	84	0.00%	84
COTTONWOOD	12,047,502	61	161,481	55	1.34%	43	5,480	166,961	59	1.39%	51
CROW WING	99,455,502	12	1,589,436	15	1.60%	37	288,050	1,877,486	14	1.89%	35
DAKOTA	477,431,817	3	20,473,397	3	4.29%	7	0	20,473,397	3	4.29%	9
DODGE	17,137,479	49	422,981	33	2.47%	23	0	422,981	38	2.47%	27
DOUGLAS	44,278,112	21	634,772	24	1.43%	39	84,966	719,738	24	1.63%	41
FARIBAULT	14,964,055	55	203,517	49	1.36%	42	24,210	227,727	50	1.52%	46
FILLMORE	18,844,952	48	506,813	30	2.69%	17	0	506,813	33	2.69%	22
FREEBORN	25,969,927	37	279,469	43	1.08%	54	176,382	455,851	35	1.76%	38
GOODHUE	56,250,893	17	1,691,338	14	3.01%	13	43,680	1,735,018	16	3.08%	16
GRANT	6,675,611	77	22,131	75	0.33%	73	9,332	31,463	74	0.47%	71
HENNEPIN	1,657,107,083	1	136,059,498	1	8.21%	1	0	136,059,498	1	8.21%	1
HOUSTON	13,811,039	57	152,630	57	1.11%	52	0	152,630	61	1.11%	57
HUBBARD	28,508,420	29	48,571	72	0.17%	80	968	49,539	73	0.17%	82
ISANTI	32,304,744	26	455,967	32	1.41%	41	0	455,967	34	1.41%	50
ITASCA	48,115,127	20	398,013	36	0.83%	62	28,217	426,230	37	0.89%	62
JACKSON	12,632,589	59	136,326	60	1.08%	53	59,210	195,536	54	1.55%	43
KANABEC	12,288,406	60	120,887	62	0.98%	57	0	120,887	63	0.98%	59
KANDIYOHI	37,609,251	22	357,123	38	0.95%	59	249,297	606,420	28	1.61%	42
KITSON	5,840,940	81	10,004	78	0.17%	79	2,944	12,948	79	0.22%	80
KOOCHICING	8,430,069	71	0	83	0.00%	82	0	0	84	0.00%	84
LAC QUI PARLE	7,221,772	76	6,294	81	0.09%	81	15,554	21,848	76	0.30%	76
LAKE	13,742,880	58	312,186	40	2.27%	27	2,826	315,012	43	2.29%	29
LAKE OF WOODS	3,582,022	85	0	83	0.00%	82	0	0	84	0.00%	84
LE SUEUR	27,266,511	32	239,221	47	0.88%	61	34,968	274,189	47	1.01%	58
LINCOLN	5,212,174	83	15,505	76	0.30%	75	0	15,505	77	0.30%	77
LYON	22,120,279	40	1,286,194	17	5.81%	4	128,581	1,414,775	19	6.40%	3
MAHONOMEN	3,191,970	86	7,433	80	0.23%	78	0	7,433	82	0.23%	79
MARSHALL	7,688,602	74	28,842	74	0.38%	72	1,664	30,506	75	0.40%	74
MARTIN	20,657,430	43	525,304	28	2.54%	21	32,634	557,938	31	2.70%	20

## Tax increment financing basics

Tax increment financing (TIF) is a tool used by cities and other development authorities to finance certain types of development costs. Cities or other authorities create TIF districts to subsidize the cost of redeveloping blighted areas, to create economic development and jobs, and to create affordable housing.

Tax increment financing enables a city or town to "capture" the additional property taxes generated by the new development within the TIF district that would have gone to other taxing jurisdictions and use that "tax increment" to pay some of the development costs that the owner, developer, or local government would otherwise have paid.

Examples of TIF-eligible costs include the acquisition of land or buildings, the demolition of substandard buildings, site preparation, the installation of utilities or road improvements, and the construction of low- and moderate-income housing.

The upfront costs of TIF-subsidized development are often financed with the proceeds from general obligation bonds or loans. The debt service on those obligations is paid with the tax increment generated by one or more TIF districts.

Some TIF districts use an alternative to bonds or loans known as pay-as-you-go financing. In this case, the property owner or developer pays the development costs up front, and then is reimbursed with the tax increment generated by the TIF district.

County	Net Tax Capacity	Rank	TIF Tax Capacity	Rank	% TIF of Total Tax Cap.	% TIF of Tax Cap. Rank	JOBZ Tax Cap.	TIF and JOBZ Tax Capacity	Rank	% TIF & JOBZ of Total Tax Cap.	% TIF & JOBZ TC Rank
MCLEOD	28,803,024	28	364,330	37	1.26%	46	76,274	440,604	36	1.53%	45
MEEKER	21,072,217	42	277,626	44	1.32%	44	134,511	412,137	39	1.96%	34
MILLE LACS	20,597,221	44	524,722	29	2.55%	20	0	524,722	32	2.55%	25
MORRISON	27,080,873	33	581,101	25	2.15%	28	40,086	621,187	27	2.29%	28
MOWER	27,436,170	31	706,629	23	2.58%	19	5,404	712,033	25	2.60%	24
MURRAY	10,816,349	64	30,585	73	0.28%	76	20,963	51,548	72	0.48%	70
NICOLLET	26,636,690	35	934,613	22	3.51%	11	22,005	956,618	22	3.59%	12
NOBLES	15,716,772	53	415,728	34	2.65%	18	397,642	813,370	23	5.18%	6
NORMAN	5,214,659	82	13,950	77	0.27%	77	0	13,950	78	0.27%	78
OLMSTED	128,863,744	8	1,483,235	16	1.15%	50	438,356	1,921,591	13	1.49%	48
OTTER TAIL	64,452,874	14	1,268,373	18	1.97%	31	191,256	1,459,629	17	2.26%	30
PENNINGTON	6,315,925	78	56,032	70	0.89%	60	0	56,032	71	0.89%	61
PINE	26,838,606	34	404,763	35	1.51%	38	6,716	411,479	40	1.53%	44
PIPESTONE	7,310,730	75	104,011	65	1.42%	40	6,626	110,637	64	1.51%	47
POLK	21,903,246	41	351,070	39	1.60%	36	25,470	376,540	41	1.72%	40
POPE	11,824,555	62	69,251	67	0.59%	68	0	69,251	68	0.59%	68
RAMSEY	556,122,418	2	40,581,499	2	7.30%	2	0	40,581,499	2	7.30%	2
RED LAKE	2,375,758	87	9,801	79	0.41%	71	0	9,801	81	0.41%	73
REDWOOD	15,458,861	54	50,506	71	0.33%	74	5,662	56,168	70	0.36%	75
RENVILLE	19,820,804	46	240,136	46	1.21%	48	17,648	257,784	48	1.30%	52
RICE	56,537,044	16	2,407,785	11	4.26%	8	50,428	2,458,213	11	4.35%	8
ROCK	9,683,767	67	155,477	56	1.61%	35	21,304	176,781	57	1.83%	37
ROSEAU	8,526,246	70	148,209	58	1.74%	32	22,070	170,279	58	2.00%	32
SCOTT	146,615,211	7	2,885,650	10	1.97%	30	0	2,885,650	10	1.97%	33
SHERBURNE	90,210,612	13	1,829,154	12	2.03%	29	0	1,829,154	15	2.03%	31
SIBLEY	15,953,588	52	196,176	50	1.23%	47	0	196,176	53	1.23%	53
ST LOUIS	149,834,711	6	7,572,926	6	5.05%	6	52,662	7,625,588	6	5.09%	7
STEARNS	122,356,447	10	5,034,414	8	4.11%	9	71,654	5,106,068	8	4.17%	11
STEELE	31,847,008	27	187,070	52	0.59%	67	29,003	216,073	51	0.68%	66
STEVENS	8,682,036	69	144,512	59	1.66%	34	17,848	162,360	60	1.87%	36
SWIFT	10,813,939	65	124,179	61	1.15%	51	0	124,179	62	1.15%	55
TODD	16,940,020	50	220,634	48	1.30%	45	19,041	239,675	49	1.41%	49
TRAVERSE	6,293,652	79	1,684	82	0.03%	82	1,947	3,631	83	0.06%	83
WABASHA	19,418,236	47	580,195	26	2.99%	14	76,044	656,239	26	3.38%	14
WADENA	8,135,460	72	193,161	51	2.37%	26	21,542	214,703	52	2.64%	23
WASECA	16,757,050	51	171,769	54	1.03%	56	15,148	186,917	56	1.12%	56
WASHINGTON	299,186,499	5	8,087,473	5	2.70%	16	0	8,087,473	5	2.70%	19
WATONWAN	9,562,462	68	67,969	68	0.71%	65	15,499	83,468	66	0.87%	64
WILKIN	7,917,152	73	75,668	66	0.96%	58	0	75,668	67	0.96%	60
WINONA	37,054,270	23	293,097	42	0.79%	63	31,948	325,045	42	0.88%	63
WRIGHT	126,321,489	9	3,159,325	9	2.50%	22	0	3,159,325	9	2.50%	26
YELLOW MEDICINE	9,984,008	66	63,760	69	0.64%	66	0	63,760	69	0.64%	67
<b>Totals</b>	<b>5,828,565,862</b>	<b>(87)</b>	<b>281,589,924</b>	<b>(83)</b>	<b>4.83%</b>	<b>(83)</b>	<b>3,929,188</b>	<b>285,519,112</b>	<b>(84)</b>	<b>4.90%</b>	<b>(84)</b>

# TIF

continued from page 7

so that we can offer a more comprehensive picture of the use of property tax subsidies for economic development and the impact of those subsidies on property taxes overall.

## JOBZ use growing

Looking at Table 1, it is clear that JOBZ is significantly increasing the level of property tax subsidy in a few counties, despite its overall low level of use compared to TIF. Brown, Chippewa, Chisago, Freeborn, Jackson, Kandiyohi, Lyon, Meeker and Nobles counties all moved up significantly in the rankings for the percent of property tax base used to subsidize economic development when JOBZ subsidies are added to the TIF totals.

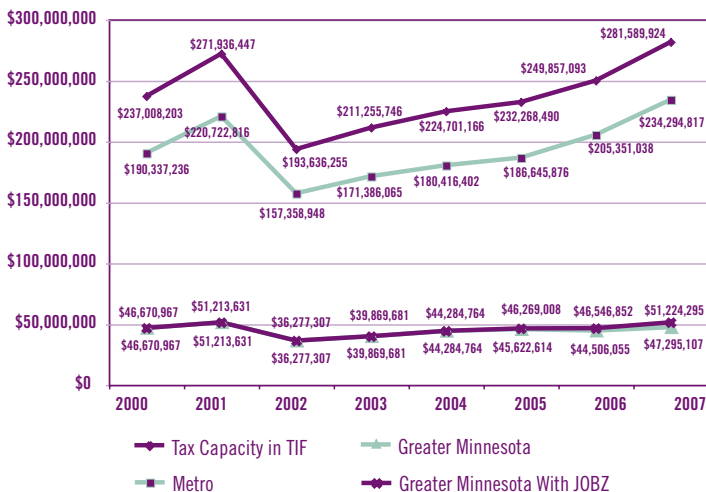
JOBZ is only available outside of the metro area and also includes other tax subsidies besides property taxes, so a JOBZ designation is a more significant overall subsidy of which property tax capacity is one part. To see comprehensive data on JOBZ and TIF use throughout Minnesota, go to [www.citizensleague.org](http://www.citizensleague.org).

## TIF growth strong in the metro

As we have noted in previous years, the property tax reforms that began in 2002 did not reform TIF, but did significantly reduce the amount of tax capacity that TIF could capture to fund economic development. Five years later, TIF tax capacity statewide has exceeded pre-2002 levels (see Figure 1). This is due mainly to metro area growth in TIF tax capacity, which has been significant in the last two years.

In Greater Minnesota, TIF use has been flat, actually declining from 2005 to 2006 before increasing somewhat in 2007. Only by adding in JOBZ tax capacity do property tax subsidies in Greater Minnesota return to pre-2002 TIF levels (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Property net tax capacity captured in TIF and JOBZ



Starting with the change from 2004 to 2005 (the first year that property tax capacity was exempted under JOBZ), Figure 2 and Figure 3 also show clearly a slower growth in TIF use in Greater Minnesota as JOBZ has ramped up.

This raises some interesting questions. Did local governments apply for JOBZ instead of TIF since JOBZ provides more incentives for developers? Or would TIF use have declined regardless due to

Figure 2. Annual percent change in TIF and JOBZ tax capacity 2002-07

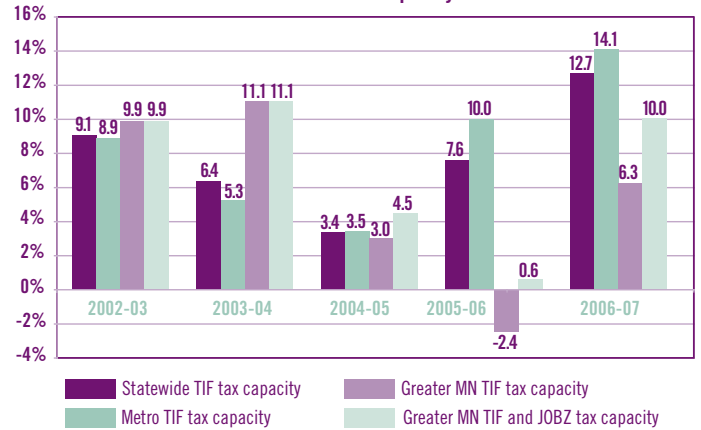
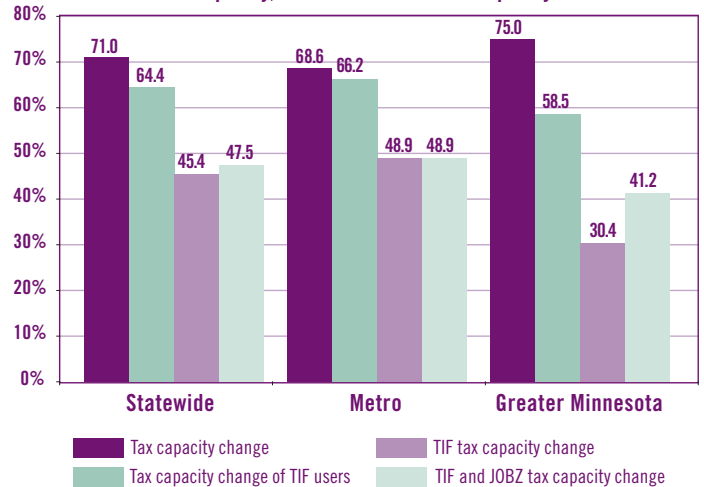


Figure 3. Percent change in tax capacity, tax capacity of TIF users, TIF tax capacity, and TIF and JOBZ tax capacity 2002-07



property tax reform, and is JOBZ now providing needed additional economic development opportunities for Greater Minnesota? We cannot answer these questions without a detailed survey of local decisions in Greater Minnesota, but TIF tax capacity rose more in Greater Minnesota than in the metro area in the first two years after property tax reform and dropped far below metro area levels after JOBZ became available.

This is very important from a policy perspective since JOBZ provides greater overall subsidies than TIF alone, and has a bigger impact on state tax revenue. JOBZ projects reduce state revenues from sources such as

- the corporate franchise tax;
- income tax for operators or investors, including capital gains tax; and
- sales taxes on goods and services used in the zone if purchased during the duration of the zone.

If these projects would have occurred with TIF only, then we have subsidized them more than was necessary. If these projects needed JOBZ to go forward, then the state is offsetting lower TIF use with JOBZ.



## Table 2: Cities with more than \$1 million in TIF and JOBZ tax capacity in 2007

(Ranked by percent of tax capacity captured in TIF and JOBZ combined)

City	County	Net Tax Capacity	% TIF of Total Tax Cap.	% TIF of Tax Cap. Rank	JOBZ Tax Cap.	TIF and JOBZ Tax Capacity	TIF & JOBZ Tax Cap. Rank	% TIF & JOBZ of Total Tax Cap.	% TIF & JOBZ TC Rank
ROGERS	HENNEPIN	15,177,071	4,929,019	32.5%	0	4,929,019	11	32.5%	1
CHASKA	CARVER	25,400,536	5,123,779	20.2%	0	5,123,779	8	20.2%	2
WAITE PARK	STEARNS	9,629,026	1,750,715	18.2%	0	1,750,715	36	18.2%	3
ANOKA	ANOKA	16,544,481	2,537,202	15.3%	0	2,537,202	25	15.3%	4
MOUNDS VIEW	RAMSEY	11,212,388	1,712,020	15.3%	0	1,712,020	37	15.3%	5
MINNEAPOLIS	HENNEPIN	435,584,275	64,601,171	14.8%	0	64,601,171	1	14.8%	6
MARSHALL	LYON	9,308,006	1,211,481	13.0%	118,750	1,330,231	46	14.3%	7
RAMSEY	ANOKA	24,396,105	3,414,988	14.0%	0	3,414,988	14	14.0%	8
NEW BRIGHTON	RAMSEY	23,593,428	3,176,060	13.5%	0	3,176,060	16	13.5%	9
WAYZATA	HENNEPIN	18,725,960	2,496,279	13.3%	0	2,496,279	26	13.3%	10
RICHFIELD	HENNEPIN	37,623,666	5,013,292	13.3%	0	5,013,292	10	13.3%	11
STILLWATER	WASHINGTON	23,193,747	3,024,624	13.0%	0	3,024,624	19	13.0%	12
CHAMPLIN	HENNEPIN	23,170,128	2,984,693	12.9%	0	2,984,693	21	12.9%	13
ST ANTHONY	HENNEPIN*	9,859,211	1,247,108	12.6%	0	1,247,108	47	12.6%	14
BROOKLYN PARK	HENNEPIN	72,871,509	8,987,546	12.3%	0	8,987,546	4	12.3%	15
FRIDLEY	ANOKA	33,857,865	4,019,606	11.9%	0	4,019,606	12	11.9%	16
DULUTH	ST LOUIS	60,030,438	6,791,921	11.3%	34,839	6,826,760	6	11.4%	17
SOUTH ST PAUL	DAKOTA	17,846,292	2,001,887	11.2%	0	2,001,887	33	11.2%	18
VADNAIS HTS	RAMSEY	18,648,134	2,061,607	11.1%	0	2,061,607	31	11.1%	19
ST LOUIS PARK	HENNEPIN	63,401,476	6,335,246	10.0%	0	6,335,246	7	10.0%	20
BROOKLYN CTR	HENNEPIN	25,293,171	2,463,631	9.7%	0	2,463,631	27	9.7%	21
COLUMBIA HTS	ANOKA	14,828,257	1,389,436	9.4%	0	1,389,436	44	9.4%	22
FARIBAULT	RICE	14,918,082	1,304,157	8.7%	43,492	1,347,649	45	9.0%	23
ST PAUL	RAMSEY	255,519,464	22,973,298	9.0%	0	22,973,298	2	9.0%	24
GOLDEN VALLEY	HENNEPIN	40,989,122	3,429,711	8.4%	0	3,429,711	13	8.4%	25
CRYSTAL	HENNEPIN	20,080,467	1,563,617	7.8%	0	1,563,617	40	7.8%	26
EDINA	HENNEPIN	113,428,895	8,771,951	7.7%	0	8,771,951	5	7.7%	27
MENDOTA HTS	DAKOTA	21,931,843	1,655,938	7.6%	0	1,655,938	38	7.6%	28
WEST ST PAUL	DAKOTA	19,819,407	1,476,232	7.4%	0	1,476,232	41	7.4%	29
NEW HOPE	HENNEPIN	20,559,023	1,471,827	7.2%	0	1,471,827	42	7.2%	30
ANDOVER	ANOKA	29,337,162	2,048,058	7.0%	0	2,048,058	32	7.0%	31
SAVAGE	SCOTT	28,649,548	1,967,961	6.9%	0	1,967,961	34	6.9%	32
BURNSVILLE	DAKOTA	76,210,903	5,055,802	6.6%	0	5,055,802	9	6.6%	33
BLOOMINGTON	HENNEPIN	145,136,630	9,495,205	6.5%	0	9,495,205	3	6.5%	34
APPLE VALLEY	DAKOTA	56,728,917	3,234,758	5.7%	0	3,234,758	15	5.7%	35
INVER GROVE HTS	DAKOTA	38,980,588	2,206,847	5.7%	0	2,206,847	28	5.7%	36
ROSEVILLE	RAMSEY	55,152,621	3,102,340	5.6%	0	3,102,340	18	5.6%	37
FOREST LAKE	WASHINGTON	22,760,971	1,220,125	5.4%	0	1,220,125	48	5.4%	38
SHOREVIEW	RAMSEY	35,550,783	1,830,461	5.1%	0	1,830,461	35	5.1%	39
BLAINE	ANOKA*	62,126,648	3,007,112	4.8%	0	3,007,112	20	4.8%	40
MANKATO	BLUE EARTH*	30,391,107	1,419,025	4.7%	12,224	1,431,249	43	4.7%	41
ST CLOUD	STEARNS*	47,072,766	2,096,729	4.5%	88,240	2,184,969	29	4.6%	42
COON RAPIDS	ANOKA	61,230,076	2,613,614	4.3%	0	2,613,614	24	4.3%	43
MAPLE GROVE	HENNEPIN	87,914,275	3,112,805	3.5%	0	3,112,805	17	3.5%	44
LAKEVILLE	DAKOTA	62,477,351	2,129,434	3.4%	0	2,129,434	30	3.4%	45
MINNETONKA	HENNEPIN	98,553,361	2,848,454	2.9%	0	2,848,454	22	2.9%	46
EDEN PRAIRIE	HENNEPIN	116,008,789	2,804,557	2.4%	0	2,804,557	23	2.4%	47
ROCHESTER	OLMSTED	91,405,254	1,204,141	1.3%	369,088	1,573,229	39	1.7%	48
<b>Totals/Averages</b>		<b>2,643,129,223</b>	<b>231,317,470</b>	<b>8.8%</b>	<b>666,633</b>	<b>231,984,103</b>		<b>8.8%</b>	

\*City has property in more than one county. County listed has most property tax capacity.

The correlation of higher TIF use in Greater Minnesota after property tax reform followed by lower TIF use once JOBZ began would suggest that JOBZ was a factor in the lower TIF use in Greater Minnesota. But a conclusion is not possible without including data on property tax abatement.

### TIF consolidation

Another possibility is that the lower revenues resulting from property tax reform reduced the ability of some communities to finance projects using TIF use alone. If that is the case, property tax reform may ultimately reduce the group of Minnesota cities and towns that can effectively use TIF.

Did local governments apply for JOBZ instead of TIF since JOBZ provides more incentives for developers?

Although the amount of TIF tax capacity grew significantly from 2006 to 2007, the number of communities using TIF dropped to 407 from a high of 424 in 2004 and below 2000 levels (417). The number of TIF districts peaked in 2006 at 1,992 and dropped to 1,970 in 2007. To see these trends and other data visit the Citizens League website.

Table 2 provides the detail on every community that is using more than \$1 million in TIF and JOBZ tax capacity. Table 3 (available online) details communities that have more than 10 percent of their tax base captured in TIF and exempted through JOBZ.

Additional information, including comprehensive data on JOBZ and TIF use throughout Minnesota, is available online at [www.citizensleague.org](http://www.citizensleague.org). Also available are Table 3, which details communities that have more than 10 percent of their tax base captured in TIF and exempted through JOBZ. Smaller communities with less than \$1 million in net tax capacity are included in Table 3a, also online. ●

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# POLICY REDUX

Sometimes it seems as if policy recommendations are made in one year and gone the next, replaced by a new set of discussions and policy priorities. But many of the reports and recommendations by Citizens League study committees have built on the work of previous committees. In this month's Policy Redux feature, we take a look at development funding and regionalized libraries.

## Accountability for the development dollar (1985)

Public assistance for private real estate development in Minnesota needs to be reformed, not rejected. City governments should be commended for their active roles in fighting deterioration and in promoting quality real estate developments.

But today's system of providing assistance has shortcomings:

- Much emphasis is given to real estate assistance as an economic development tool. Its influence is felt mainly on the location of jobs and tax base, not their creation.
- Instead of being targeted to areas of real need, financial assistance is available almost anywhere, for any type of real estate project.
- Taxpayers often have no knowledge of how much public money is being spent on a real estate project, where it is coming from and who receives the benefit.
- Dollars of real estate assistance don't show up in the regular operating budgets of city councils. Consequently, city councils don't have to weigh the importance of real estate subsidies against competing needs for dollars.
- More help probably is given than is necessary to make a real estate project go because city officials have little incentive to be tough negotiators.

To correct these and other problems we recommend a system of real estate assistance that emphasizes direct, not indirect, sources of revenue; appropriations, not entitlements; on-budget decisions, not off-budget; and assistance that is targeted, not general. Specifically, the Legislature should:

- Give each city government access to a new redevelopment fund that would be financed from direct state and local revenue sources.
- Allow expenditures from the fund only for renewal of properties, consistent with a previously adopted plan.
- Instruct the Metropolitan Council and other regional planning bodies in the state to develop guidelines to prevent unnecessary spending in inter-city competition.
- Give cities incentives to be tough negotiators with developments, including incentives to negotiate for the recovery of financial assistance provided to developers; to establish before negotiations a point beyond which no further city assistance will be offered; and to use only experienced negotiators.
- Phase out tax-increment financing as the redevelopment fund is established. In the meantime, tighten up tax-increment financing by (a) repealing its use where no redevelopment is occurring; (b) requiring a city government to reimburse the state partially for its loss of revenue; (c) disallowing accumulation of surpluses in tax-increment districts, beyond allowing the placement of up to three years' surplus in the proposed redevelopment fund; (d) discontinuing the practice of pooling tax-increment funds; (e) requiring that the actual tax burden of each tax-increment district be made known; (f) requiring that city administrative expenses be financed from sources other than tax-increment financing; and (g) requiring that a provision that allows a decline in market values to be ignored in tax-increment districts.

## A new regional approach to library services: long overdue (1991)

Our study of library services in the region was prompted by an interest in taking a second, outside look at the Minneapolis Library Board's proposal to build a new central library at a cost of \$100 million. However, we soon saw that any examination of that proposal would need to take a broad, regional view of how library systems, services and buildings in the Twin Cities are organized, financed, and governed.

### We asked:

- Given changes in library and information technology, what functions should be housed in central library facilities? What are alternative approaches to providing sites for public information services?
- Is the Minneapolis Library Board's plan for a new central facility well supported by a vision of the services that would be provided there? Should a new central library be built in Minneapolis? If so, who should be involved in planning the facility and who should be responsible for financing it?
- If significant capital expenditures for central city libraries are desirable, what changes in governance are appropriate for library systems in the region?

### Findings

The Twin Cities area is a generally "well-librared" area, with several strong, well-funded systems. We focused on the nine major public library systems: Minneapolis, St. Paul, and the seven county library systems. These systems have achieved a relatively high degree of cooperation. Under arrangements developed through MELSA (Metropolitan Library Service Agency, the regional library federation), residents of the region can present their system's library card at other

libraries and have full borrowing and reference privileges. The largest library systems in the region have high per capita spending in comparison with their national peers. Among the 74 library systems in the United States and Canada serving areas with populations of between 250,000 and 499,999, Minneapolis ranked first in per capita spending; St. Paul ranked ninth.

### Conclusions

- This region has generally strong library systems with capable managers.
- Libraries in the region have a strong tradition of collaboration and resource sharing of which they are justifiably proud.
- The challenge for the future of libraries; and for the future economy of the metropolitan area is to find new ways to share resources and provide services effectively.

### Recommendations

- Developing and implementing regional solutions to the future needs of the library systems in the region. We propose four initiatives: a regional reference service, a regional materials depository, a regional plan for connecting library computer systems, and a strengthened regional coordinating structure.
- Strengthening branch library operations to service users. In our view, services and control should be closer to the branches to reflect the needs and concerns of each local community.
- The region's library systems should not make major investments in new or renovated central libraries at this time.
- Libraries need to emphasize building supportive constituencies that will help with financial assistance and political advocacy.

# PERSPECTIVES

Expanding Minnesota's Conversation



## From Monticello to Minnesota, the pursuit of Jeffersonian happiness...

By Tim Schuster

In an earlier version of the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson uses a definition of freedom different from the one we know today: “life, liberty, and the pursuit of *public* happiness” (emphasis added). Many historians contend the other framers considered the extra word inherent—even too wordy—for the document’s declarative purposes. So Jefferson omitted the extra word knowing that public happiness would always trump personal happiness. But too often, this idea of public happiness seems to run counter to today’s political culture of personal happiness.

This idea of public happiness seems to run counter to today’s political culture of personal happiness.

Or so I thought until I joined the Citizen League staff as an intern, helping to launch a survey, facilitate focus groups, and call members (read owners) to find out what they value in a citizen-based organization and why they became Citizens League members.

Fittingly, what we found is that Citizen League members are not unlike the Citizens League staff. In fact, these conversations helped open my naïve intern eyes to the essence of the Citizens League. This organization—from its board of directors to its staff to its members—is engaged in the pursuit of Jefferson’s idea: we are not personally happy until we as a citizenry are publicly happy.

As my internship unfolded, I learned how, like our members, the Citizens League staff embodies a bit of that Jeffersonian happiness. Like members, the staff enjoys engaging in dialogue over the challenging and often potentially divisive issues facing our state. They value non-partisan, behind-the-corporate-media information—the type of information that inspires

curiosity, sparks action and provides accountability. Not unlike a few of our focus groups, staff members also tend to get off-topic while discussing gas prices or brainstorming crazy ideas for education. Hey, we all get a bit wonky at times.

And like many of our members, we take every chance we get to participate in focus groups or fill out online surveys in exchange for a chance at a gift card or a free lunch.

Like our members, we also realize the importance of balancing deep policy work with light-hearted civic discussions. We respect the policy development process for its intellectual challenge, time commitment, and a set of unknowns that make policy work as entrepreneurial as it is important. At the same time we enjoy the nonchalant, low-structure atmosphere at

Policy and a Pint® events. It’s a mixed drink, a perfect blend. Policy happens wherever we are.

During our second focus group session, a young member sat down at the table with a boxed lunch, and, after greeting the person to her left, remarked, “I didn’t know you were a member of the Citizens League.” Connecting our members not only with the organization but with each other is as much our opportunity as it is our obligation. Some of Minnesota’s most engaged citizens, young and old, belong to this organization. It’s time they connected.

Over the summer, the survey results became clear: we could not agree more that we have come a long way but we have a long way to go. The Citizens League is not a league without its members.

But in asking why the Citizens League exists we should look not only at its donor list or mission statement. The Citizens League’s story has historical roots as a place where people come together to solve public problems. Then, at some point, they needed legal status as an entity to carry

out their purpose more effectively. As I learned, however, this mission-driven, non-profit organization is more than a merely the creature of a charitable tax code; rather, I’d describe it as an animal for the Declaration of Independence. The actions of Citizens League members guarantee the greatest liberty Jefferson’s drafters could not afford to take away: the pursuit of happiness is the right to gather people around the challenges of solving important issues.

Putting the public in public policy, as one member said it, is more than strategic mobilization of rallying the grassroots. It is a cause for a civic celebration, a reason to convene, to bring people together and watch the positive change that occurs when we put the peoples’ interests and well-being at the forefront of our civic decision-making. Policy development takes on the personalities and the life experiences of the people involved in the process, and therefore the people it benefits, adding that intangible element achieved only when stakeholders create the solution. The entire process becomes a context, even an excuse—as one Citizens League member said—“to develop relationships with interesting people who want to affect change.”

If the Citizens League were a person, who would it be and why? We posed this question to a number of Citizen League members, and we loved hearing the responses. Answers ranged from “a college student,” to Nelson Mandela to Sean Kershaw. While each answer carried a different story based on the speaker’s personal experience with the organization, each identified a certain higher purpose, a belief in the pursuit of public happiness.

We are no longer asking what the Citizens League can do for its members, but how members can pursue Minnesota’s public happiness through the Citizens League. ●

After serving as a summer intern at the Citizens League, Tim Schuster traveled to Jaipur, India to continue his studies in international development. He will continue his internship this spring while he finishes his undergraduate studies at the University of Minnesota.

## The Minnesota Journal

Publisher – Sean Kershaw

Editor – J. Trout Lowen

Managing Editors – Bob DeBoer and Victoria Ford

The Minnesota Journal (ISSN 0741-9449) is a publication of the Citizens League, a nonprofit nonpartisan Twin Cities public affairs organization, 555 North Wabasha St., Suite 240, St. Paul, MN 55102. Phone: (651) 293-0575. Fax: (651) 293-0576. E-mail: [info@citizensleague.org](mailto:info@citizensleague.org). Website: [www.citizensleague.org](http://www.citizensleague.org). Mary Pickard, chair. Articles and commentary are drawn from a broad range of perspectives and do not necessarily reflect Citizens League positions on policy questions. The Journal is published 11 times a year. Periodicals postage paid at St. Paul, MN and additional offices.

Annual subscription rate for nonmembers is \$40 for 11 issues. Orders may be placed at (651) 293-0575 or by mail at the above address.

Postmaster: Send address changes to the Minnesota Journal, 555 North Wabasha St., Suite 240, St. Paul, MN 55102.



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St. Paul, MN 55102

PERIODICALS

Register for upcoming events online at [www.citizensleague.org](http://www.citizensleague.org)

will be open all night.

Learn more about the Citizens League's policy agenda and help us discover how "Policy Happens Everywhere." From transportation policy to a video booth run by students from StudentsSpeakOut.org, the Open House will give you an opportunity to learn from each other about key issues for the coming year. Stop by for half an hour or stay longer — the doors

**Saint Paul College, 235 Marshall Ave., Saint Paul**

**4 to 8 p.m.**

**Policy Open House: Policy Happens Everywhere**

more on page 2.

Join the Citizens League for this exciting event by young people for young people. Connect for a Cause will bring together area nonprofits with young leaders looking to contribute. Find out

**Varsity Theater, 1308 Fourth Street S.E., Minneapolis**

**5:30 p.m. volunteer speed-match; 7 p.m. networking and social hour**

**Connect for a Cause: volunteer speed-matching**

2/28

2/11