



center for rural policy and development

Seeking Solutions for Greater Minnesota's Future

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SUMMER 2011

Executive Director's Note

Legislature heads into overtime to solve state's budget deficit

by Brad Finstad



For the fifth time in the last ten years, the Minnesota Legislature will go into overtime with a special session as GOP legislative leaders and DFL Governor Mark Dayton were unable to agree on a plan to

balance the state's budget. To many state capitol observers it appears the philosophical difference separating the two sides is as large as the numerical difference.

Legislative Republicans are adamant in their belief that a state budget of \$34 billion will both meet the needs of vital state programs and put Minnesota's small business job creators on a path to economic recovery. Governor Dayton is equally insistent that increased revenue and a budget of \$35.8 billion are necessary to preserve Minnesota's social and educational well-being.

Will these disagreements be bridged in time to avert a state government shutdown? At press time for this edition of the newsletter, a

compromise had not been reached and it is increasingly clear that a potentially insurmountable divide separates the two sides. Stay tuned, there is much at stake.

The Center for Rural Policy and Development is known for its emphasis on providing cutting-edge research on the issues and challenges facing rural Minnesota. That focus continues in coming months as we release reports on three topical concerns for governmental, health care and agricultural leaders.

Look for an in-depth report on the role played by Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) in the delivery of health care services in rural Minnesota communities. The Center will also be weighing in

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Board Member Spotlight: Representative Bob Gunther



As the co-owner with his brothers of a Fairmont grocery store started by his dad in 1946, Bob Gunther never envisioned himself as a future politician. But when incumbent State Representative Gene Hugoson was appointed Commissioner of Agriculture in 1995, Gunther ran for and won the special election. Since then, Gunther has been handily re-elected, running unopposed three times and winning over 60 percent of the vote in his five subsequent elections.

His committee assignments, while varied during his 16 years in the legislature, have always included a lead role in job creation and economic development, and he has been one of the legislature's strongest advocates for rural Minnesota.

Gunther is no stranger to the Center for Rural Policy and Development, having been a contributing member as well as a previous board member from 1999 to 2006. He believes the center's chief role is "to seek out and undertake the research necessary to help rural Minnesota stay competitive, not only within the state, but with surrounding states as well." Without cutting edge research – and the

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Center Releases Latest Issue of *Rural Minnesota Journal*

The role youth and young adults play in the future of Rural Minnesota



The Center for Rural Policy and Development is pleased to announce that the latest issue of *Rural Minnesota Journal* is now available for download at www.RuralMN.org. In this issue, policymakers will discuss the role of youth and young adults on rural Minnesota communities; the economic and

cultural impact the migration of young adults to cities and suburbs has, and will continue to play in the future of rural Minnesota, and possible solutions to this centuries-old challenge.

Each issue of *Rural Minnesota Journal* focuses on one topic, bringing together some of Minne-

sota's leading experts in their fields. The newest issue includes eight articles authored by leaders of organizations that deal with and look out for rural interests.

Ben Winchester, of the University of Minnesota, Morris has contributed a piece describing the "brain gain" he believes demographic analysis supports.

Neil Linscheid, an Extension Educator in Community Economics in Marshall writes about the economic impact of youth in rural Minnesota communities. Jessica Beyer, Public Information Specialist for Blue Earth County describes the future roles of young people in local government.

Priscilla Day of the University of Minnesota Duluth's Center for Regional and Tribal Child Welfare Studies discusses the effects of

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CRPD Honors Retiring Board Members

Rep. Kathy Brynaert and Garfield Eckberg are honored for their service as board members of the Center for Rural Policy and Development. Brynaert, from Mankato has served on the board since 2006. Eckberg, from Nicollet, is an original member of the board, having served since 1997.

Also deserving of thanks and recognition are State Senator Dan Sparks of Austin, Blandin Foundation President Jim Hoolihan of Grand Rapids and Sandy Layman, former commissioner of Iron Range Resources who recently completed their terms as CRPD Board Members. ●



Rep. Kathy Brynaert



Garfield Eckberg

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with a study that seeks to provide common-sense assistance to local governments wrestling with budget challenges; and we will be providing an analysis of farm business management education programs currently delivered at 85 different sites across Minnesota under the direction of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system.

One of the ongoing challenges not only for communities in rural Minnesota, but for small towns throughout the United States is how to make rural living attractive for young adults. Look for a comprehensive report on this topic in the August edition of the Rural Minnesota Journal, our award-winning publication that brings together some of the state's leading experts in their fields for a comprehensive look at public policy issues impacting rural Minnesota.

Have a great summer! ●

JOURNAL

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out-of-home placement on Native-American youth. Beth Priddy is director of Business & Entrepreneurial Services at Minnesota State Community and Technical College in Detroit Lakes. She writes about youth entrepreneurship and what role it plays in rural economic development.

Laurissa Steigen of the Central Minnesota Area Health Education Center has contributed a piece on her organization's efforts to recruit young people to the health care work force in rural Minnesota. Tracy Gaalswyk, a Nicollet County

farmer writes about youth, technology, farming and what it means for rural Minnesota, and Bryan Joyce, a Windom, Minnesota social studies teacher describes the role education plays in forming rural leaders of the future.

The new issue of Rural Minnesota Journal will be released the first week of August and can be found in its entirety online at <http://www.mnsu.edu/ruralmn/rmjindex.php>. Printed copies can be obtained by calling the Center at (507) 934-7700. ●

Did You Know? Facts on Fairs

- Fairs are large theme-based events held to promote and present agricultural, commercial, industrial, and artistic exhibits while also providing the fun and amusement of carnivals.
- The first annual fair in the American colonies was held in 1641 in New Amsterdam (now New York City) to showcase farm products of the local area.
- The USA's first state fair was held in Syracuse, New York in September of 1841.
- The first World's Fair was held in 1851 in England at London's Crystal Palace. The fair exhibited American machinery of the

- Industrial Revolution.
- The Ferris wheel was invented by George W. Ferris for the 1893 World's Fair, which was held in Chicago to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Columbus's landing in America.
- Cotton Candy was originally called "Fairy Floss" and was invented in 1897 and introduced at the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904.
- Games you play at a fair or carnival also go by the slang name, "joints."

Source: <http://www.vivisoriginalsauce.com/Carnival%20Facts.html>. ●



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Seeking Solutions for Greater Minnesota's Future

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MISSION: The Center for Rural Policy and Development provides high quality and objective research to examine and advance policy and decision-making, advocacy and civic engagement for Greater Minnesota's development.

VISION: The Center for Rural Policy and Development will be the leading and most trusted source of research and recommendations to advance policies that improve the quality of life in Greater Minnesota.

VALUES:

Research Excellence. We endeavor to strive for excellence in every project in which we engage.

Political Non-partisanship. Political non-partisanship is the historical foundation of our work. We are committed to maintaining that reputation.

Collaboration. Collaboration will be the hallmark of our future work. Our success will be defined by the partnerships we create.

Commitment to Minnesota. A strong Minnesota requires a healthy and vibrant Greater Minnesota. We are committed to supporting quality decision-making that will positively impact Greater Minnesota's ability to thrive.

County Fairs in Minnesota – A Rich Part of our State’s History



Mix together food, music, animals, carnival rides, hundreds of volunteers, politics, a little more food, entertainment ranging from demolition derbies to rodeos to motor-cross racing, arts and crafts, kids and adults alike engaged in friendly competition, a bit more food and what do you get? A county fair in Minnesota.

With summer comes the annual return of county fairs to our state’s lineup of entertainment options. Just how popular are county fairs in Minnesota? The fact that Minnesota has 87 counties -- but 95 county fairs -- should serve as a clue. (Quick quiz: Which counties have more than one fair? See the answer at the end of this article.)

Minnesota’s history is rich in county fair lore, and nearly every county has an interesting story about its own county fair. For in-

stance, according to an August 18, 1949 article in the Dodge County Republican newspaper, the Dodge County Fair was determined to be Minnesota’s oldest county fair. The paper noted that “the first Dodge County Fair was held at Mantorville on October 8, 1857, and \$115 in premiums were paid.” This was the first county fair in the Minnesota Territory and took place a full seven months before Minnesota became a state.

In 1927, the Steele County Fair became a “free fair” with no admission charged. It has remained that way to this day and is both the largest free county fair in the state of Minnesota and among the largest county fairs in the United States according to Elmer Reseland, the fair’s Secretary-Manager and unofficial historian.

Winona County, which start-

ed its tradition in 1858, describes their fair as “an educational event that not only showcases competitive events, but is a historic link to the past generations of Winona County. At the county fair the rural and urban populations have a chance to meet and connect.”

Indeed, it is these meetings that have led to plenty of courtships and marriages throughout Minnesota. And it is no coincidence that many schools schedule their class reunions during fair week, and many families coordinate their “come home time” to attend the fair.

The fact that county fairs operate year after year with hardly a blip is in no small part due to the hundreds of volunteers who give of their time and talent to ensure the show goes on.

One group of volunteers that serves all county fair boards is the Minnesota Federation of County Fairs (MFCF). According to Dan Grunhvd, MFCF President, the organization is at least 80-90 years old or more, and serves as a clearinghouse for information related to county fairs. The group holds a yearly convention in which members keep abreast of the latest ideas and trends in all things fair related.

One thing that has remained constant is the need for county fairs to adapt to agricultural, horticultural and societal changes in order to keep interest and attendance

at sustainable levels. In the early 1950s, the Polk County Fair Board aptly described the challenge.

“County fairs, like any other enterprise must keep up with the ever changing times, conditions and outlook. This is especially true in the matter of entertainment which is an integral part of a fair’s operation. For many years and up to the time automobiles came into general use, horse races were the principal attractions offered, followed by a baseball game. Later, one or two comedy or circus acts were added, usually placed between race heats to better fill out the afternoon programs.”

In one county, as the number of butter producers decreased, the fair had to end its butter exhibit and competition, which was replaced by a bee and honey competition. After 15 years, out went the bees and honey, only to be replaced by a beer and wine making competition. Additionally, exhibits dedicated to organic foods are playing an increasing role in the lineups of some county fairs.

One thing is certain. County fairs will continue to adapt and change with the times as they have for the past 154 years of Minnesota’s history. Quiz answer: the six counties in Minnesota with more than one fair include Cass, Goodhue, Morrison, Koochiching, Ottertail and Saint Louis. ●

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GUNTHER

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legislation to enact research findings into law – Gunther sees rural Minnesota falling farther behind.

Citing a survey done in the recent past, Gunther notes that the poll results indicated over 75 percent of metro residents strongly support a prosperous greater Minnesota because, among other reasons, “that’s where Gramma lives.” Health care and education are also key Gunther priorities for rural Minnesota as 60 percent of hospital billings are Medicare and Medicaid reimbursed, and rural Min-



nesota schools continue to suffer from declining enrollment. Gunther believes improving

the prosperity of rural Minnesota must take place hand-in-hand with an expanded economy in the met-

ro area. “It’s not a competition,” he notes, “we need to work together to enhance greater Minnesota and the metro area.”

In his position as chair of the Jobs and Economic Development Finance Committee, expect Gunther to play a prominent role both in deliberations as a board member of the Center for Rural Policy and Development, and in the halls of the Capitol. ◆

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