

CENTER *for* RURAL POLICY and DEVELOPMENT

Seeking Solutions for Greater Minnesota's Future

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FALL 2010

Executive Director's Note

Dear CRPD Members and Friends:

As the campaign for Minnesota governor enters its final stretch, the Center for Rural Policy and Development is honored that the three major party candidates—Tom Horner, Tom Emmer and Mark Dayton—have all accepted our invitation to share with you their respective visions for rural Minnesota. Statewide campaigns are long and extremely demanding, so we sincerely thank the three candidates for taking the time to write guest columns for this newsletter.

The gubernatorial race is very competitive, and any of these three candidates could be our governor come January 2011. As rural Minnesota residents and advocates, we hope you find these columns helpful as you weigh who to vote for in November.

— Brad Finstad, Executive Director, Center for Rural Policy & Development

Center Releases Latest Issue of *Rural Minnesota Journal*

“A Letter to the Next Governor of Minnesota” is introduced at Farmfest 2010 in Redwood County

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.

Brad Finstad, the Center's executive director, introduced “A Letter to the Next Governor of Minnesota” at Farmfest 2010 in Redwood County.

Each issue of *Rural Minnesota Journal* focuses on one topic, bringing together some of Minnesota'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. The articles are written to educate the next governor of Minnesota on issues of critical importance to rural Minnesota.

Lee Warne, executive director of the Minnesota Rural Education Association, has contributed a piece looking at the many questions facing education and how they affect schools, students, teachers and administrators in rural parts of the state.

Chris Radatz of the Minnesota Farm Bureau and Doug Peterson of the Minnesota Farmers' Union discuss in their articles what the future holds for agriculture in this state and ways to think about keeping one of Minnesota's major industries strong into the future.

Steve Perkins of Luverne, Minn., is a director of the Minnesota Hospital Association. His piece discusses the impact of hospital closures on rural communities and the many ways that today's health care system works for and against small towns and their health care communities.

Jim Miller, executive director

Gubernatorial Candidates Outline their Visions for Rural Minnesota



Tom Horner *Independence Party*

Over the next four years, Minnesota is going to need a governor with the temperament, skills and understanding of our state to build consensus around ideas that will promote growth, prosperity and good jobs in our small communities.

One of the toughest challenges for many of those communities is that young people are leaving their hometowns because they don't see a future for themselves there. I propose to help turn this “brain drain” into a “brain gain” for rural Minnesota through a balanced approach for state and local investment, along with planning and support for rebuilding the economic foundation through state-supported



Tom Emmer *Republican Party*

Too often, when people in the halls of government turn their thoughts to rural Minnesota, they think they are looking into Minnesota's past glories, but not its future vibrancy.

That's a mistake—a big mistake.

In many ways the challenges that all of Minnesota is facing now have been a reality for decades in greater Minnesota. Changing economic conditions, tight budgets, technological upheaval, changing demographics and competition for economic development have been the norm in rural Minnesota, and urban Minnesota is just catching up with reality.

The Twin Cities and regional centers across the state should



Mark Dayton *DFL Party*

Every Minnesotan should have access to world-class schools, good jobs with family-supporting wages and lasting benefits, and quality, affordable health care.

Earlier this year, I completed my “87 in 87” tour, traveling to every one of Minnesota's 87 counties in just 87 days. I drove 9,000 miles, and talked to thousands of Minnesotans in every area of the state about their struggles and anxieties. It's clear that Minnesotans everywhere need and deserve a “Better Minnesota.”

That's the theme of my campaign. It's a theme that touches every Minnesota community, from Ada to Zumbrota and everywhere in between.

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HORNER

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education and training programs, transportation and communication capacity.

My running mate, Jim Mulder, likes to address some of the problems this way: We need to let farmers farm, and recognize that the state should be a partner, not an adversary. A Horner-Mulder administration will provide every opportunity to increase the value of agriculture products. And we need to solve the problem of agriculture land valuation, differentiating between speculative and productive value of the land.

Greater Minnesota needs a strong transportation network that can move products to markets and support worker access to jobs. This includes well-maintained highways, revitalized freight and passenger rail (starting with a Rochester-to-Twin Cities high speed corridor) and inter-and-intra-city transit options. The Horner administration will propose \$400 million in state bonding for the Local Bridge Improvement Program.

A statewide broadband system would be the backbone of rural revitalization—what I think of as the 2010 version of Rural Electrification—putting rural Minnesota in touch with ideas, jobs and markets around the world...the next generation's superhighway. We would use state bonding authority, in partnership with the private sector, to make access available for all. It is particularly important that community schools have high speed Internet access to Minnesota's university systems.

We will promote innovation and new technologies through support for research at our two- and four-year colleges and universities, especially in areas that can help leverage the unique regional economic assets of communities

around the state. We seek to target opportunities that best fit each community, whether it is tourism, manufacturing, agriculture or new green industries.

We need to invest in early learning for children all across our state, and work with communities to make sure that our schools have the resources they need, while holding schools and parents accountable for the use of those resources. We propose cradle-to-grave educational opportunities, so people can acquire the knowledge and the skills to thrive in our changing economy.

A vital element of our economic development plan is a state-supported education and training program that meets the needs of expanding businesses. Modeled after the Iowa Industrial New Jobs Training Program, the program would be financed through bonds sold by state or local governments, retraining workers for our changing business economy. Those that hire these workers divert a percentage of state withholding taxes generated by the new jobs to retire the bonds, so the training program costs companies nothing.

Finally, we recognize that collaboration is the key for competing nationally and internationally. The state must coordinate assistance with and through regional organizations. The state must also collaborate with the university systems, Minnesota foundations, economic development organizations and others to build a strategic, coordinated economic development plan. And our economic strategies must maintain a focus on the creation of well-paying career opportunities. My vision of rural Minnesota sees a Minnesota that is a great place to live, to work and to raise our families. ●

EMMER

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be looking to rural communities for examples of how to adapt to changing circumstances. We need restructuring, reforming and streamlining of state government—and one of the best places to look how to do just that is our rural communities. Sharing services, getting full value for every dollar and adapting to changing circumstances are all just another day on the job for rural Minnesotans.

Minnesota's economy rests on a foundation of a responsible use of our rich and abundant natural resources. Agriculture, logging, mining and manufacturing are the backbone of our rural economy—these are the backbone of the Minnesota economy as a whole. However much we focus on the “knowledge economy” or the “service economy,” we can't lose sight of how vital the “making stuff” economy is to our prosperity. And making stuff—food, fuel, windows, trusses, ore and manufactured goods of all kinds is what rural Minnesotans do best.

Minnesotans are all facing the same challenges: An underperforming economy with too few jobs; challenging demographic changes that could slow our economy even more; rising health care costs; rising taxes; and a state government that is good at growing itself, and not so good at growing the economy.

We can't meet the challenges of today by doing the same old things in the same old way. Even more government, even higher taxes, even more expensive health care, even more job-killing regulations and even more bureaucrats will not solve our problems.

What can the government do better? Focus on the basics, and do them really well. Government needs to ensure that all Minne-

sotans have access to emergency services, infrastructure like roads and bridges, and the educational opportunities that provide the next generation with the skills and habits that will ensure their success in the future.

Government needs to work for people and not against them. Just about the only growth industry we have in Minnesota is government, and that simply doesn't work in the long run. Too much government means higher taxes for the rest of us, more job-killing regulations and fewer opportunities for our kids.

We need to make Minnesota the best place in the world to live, work, raise a family and start a business. We need to draw businesses into Minnesota, not drive them out.

Rural Minnesota is not now, and really never has been, the ca-boose at the end of Minnesota's economic train; it has been and should be the engine at the front of the train. Sure, there are special challenges that need to be met to ensure rural Minnesotans get the support they need to keep that engine humming as it should, but that engine is as basically sound today as it was 100 years ago. Those of us in state government need to ensure that rural Minnesota is once again the well-oiled machine we all need it to be. ●

CENTER for RURAL POLICY and DEVELOPMENT

Seeking Solutions for Greater Minnesota's Future

600 South Fifth Street, Suite 211 • St. Peter, MN 56082 • 507-934-7700 (V) • 877-RURALMN (toll free)

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.

DAYTON

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However, greater Minnesota communities face unique challenges and threats to their prosperity. That’s why I’m proud that we’re the only campaign in this race that sought a voice from greater Minnesota to bring representation of the entire state to our ticket. My excellent running mate, Senator Yvonne Prettner Solon from Duluth, has been a champion for rural communities throughout her time in the Legislature.

Together, we will stand up for everyone in Minnesota.

Specifically, we will pursue five essential policies that will help rural communities in these tough times, and lay the groundwork for rural development in the coming years.

1. *Yvonne and I will restore the state’s commitment to essential local services.*

When a devastating F4 tornado tore through Wadena this summer, the rapid response time of local po-

lice and fire protection saved lives. Yet over the last eight years, St. Paul has broken its commitment to local governments, forcing property taxes to skyrocket while essential local services have been slashed. Yvonne and I will restore the state’s financial commitment to greater Minnesota communities so that all Minnesota cities and counties can keep property taxes low while maintaining high-quality public services.

2. *Expand funding for hospitals and clinics in greater Minnesota.*

Our current health care system is broken.

Upon taking office, one of our first priorities will be securing \$1.4 billion in available federal health care funding because it will provide better care, it will create jobs and ensure the fiscal health of hospitals and clinics in rural communities, and it’s a good deal for Minnesota.

3. *Fund shovel-ready projects in greater Minnesota.*

Governor Pawlenty callously eliminated funding for 24 high quality public infrastructure projects in greater Minnesota. Those projects, which are shovel-ready and would put people back to work immediately, would be first in line for consideration in the \$1 billion bonding bill that we will propose early next year. They include public safety buildings, higher education research and training facilities, economic development infrastructure, millions for greater Minnesota transit projects and millions in funding for early childhood learning and child protection facilities across the state.

4. *Support biofuels in greater Minnesota.*

Ethanol and biodiesel promote energy independence while fueling economic growth. Today, the ethanol producer payments are simply providing back payments after the state once again broke its promise to greater Minnesota. I would

maintain those payments and ensure that the ethanol industry continues to grow across the state.

5. *Invest in statewide broadband.*

The lack of comprehensive high-speed technological infrastructure in greater Minnesota is both unfair and bad for business development. Rural start-ups are hampered as they are placed at a competitive disadvantage due to inferior technology, and companies are less likely to re-locate to communities without broadband. Yvonne and I will work with our congressional delegation and the Minnesota Broadband Task Force to ensure that every Minnesotan has access to broadband technology, regardless of where they live.

Yvonne and I will be champions for greater Minnesota. We hope you’ll consider supporting us in November. ●

Did You Know?

- Minnesota has had 39 governors. Republicans have served as governor 26 times, Democratic-Farmer-Laborites have served 12 times and the state has had one Reform/Independence Party governor (Jesse Ventura).
- Henry Sibley, a Democrat, was elected as the first governor in a statewide election held on October 13, 1857 and took office following Minnesota’s entry into the Union as the 32nd state on May 11, 1858.
- The three current major party candidates for governor were all raised in the Twin Cities metro area.
- Alexander Ramsey, who served from 1860 to 1863, was the state’s first Republican governor. Prior to Minnesota becoming an official state, Ramsey served as the first governor of the Minnesota Territory, from 1849 to 1853.
- Minnesota has not had a governor from greater Minnesota since 1991, when Rudy Perpich left office. Perpich, a Democratic-Farmer-Laborite from Hibbing, served from 1976 to 1979 and again from 1983 to 1991. The last Republican governor from greater Minnesota was Al Quie of Dennison, who served from 1979 to 1983.

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RMJ

Rural Minnesota Journal

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“A Letter to the Next Governor of Minnesota”

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JOURNAL

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of the League of Minnesota Cities, talks about the hazards facing our cities in greater Minnesota in the form of deficits and budget cuts, but also discusses how the state can help these struggling communities. King Banaian and Rich MacDonald, professors of economics at St. Cloud State University, discuss the results of their annual survey of businesses in St. Cloud and how that city’s economy is indelibly connected with the rural economy around it. Dane Smith, president of the or-

ganization Growth & Justice and a long-time political reporter, makes observations on the challenges and opportunities facing rural Minnesota, especially its businesses, and why it’s worth the investment. Finally, Brad Finstad, executive director of the Center for Rural Policy and Development and a former state legislator, and Marnie Werner, research manager for the Center and a former Capitol reporter, discuss the effects of policy created in St. Paul on the rest of the state and the law of unintended

consequences. The new issue of *Rural Minnesota Journal* can be found in its entirety online at <http://www.mnsu.edu/ruralmn/pages/Publications/rmj/RMJ5-10/RMJ%202010.pdf>. Printed copies can be obtained by calling the Center at (507) 934-7700. ●

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letter

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