

RMJ

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Foreword
Sen. Norm Coleman



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The Center for Rural Policy and Development, based in St. Peter, Minn., is a private, not-for-profit policy research organization dedicated to benefiting Minnesota by providing its policy makers with an unbiased evaluation of issues from a rural perspective.

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Foreword

Sen. Norm Coleman

For anyone living, working or traveling in Greater Minnesota, it is easy to see the numerous traits that make our state great. From our pristine waters and forests, to our nation-leading agriculture, timber and mining industries, to our close-knit small town families, rural Minnesota embodies the qualities that truly make our nation great.

Over the past few years, I have had the privilege of traveling across the state to visit with countless folks in rural Minnesota. Through these visits, it is clear that rural Minnesota is a place of great potential, yet also one with unique challenges.

Perhaps one of the greatest strengths of rural Minnesota is the economic diversity found in the four corners of the state. From the taconite mines on the Iron Range to the wind farms in Southwest Minnesota — and everywhere in between — Minnesota boasts one of the most diverse rural economies in the entire nation. While cities like Minneapolis and St. Paul are often thought of as the center of Minnesota's economy, the reality is that our expansive rural industries are truly a major driving force behind our state's financial strength.

Each year, millions of tourists travel to Minnesota to enjoy our pristine waters and vast outdoors, pouring significant money into the rural economy. Farmers in Minnesota continue to feed the world, and they are already fueling our nation as we continue to increase the use of renewable fuels such as ethanol, biodiesel and solar power. Our timber and mining industries continue to provide jobs for families across northern Minnesota, helping maintain a strong economy in one of the most beautiful places in the country.

Despite these strengths, our rural economy faces significant challenges as well. Younger members of the workforce are sometimes compelled to move to larger cities in an effort to find various types of work. Many of our smallest communities suffer from a lack of necessary infrastructure as sewer systems age, main street businesses

struggle and populations decline.

I have great concerns when our rural residents face these challenges. Our overall state economy is only as strong as our rural economy, and it is crucial that we do what we can to protect rural Minnesotans. Rest assured that I am committed to fighting for them whenever possible.

Some of my work in the past year alone to help meet these challenges includes leading efforts in the Senate to extend the farm safety net to protect Minnesota farmers, develop a clean-coal gasification plant on the Iron Range, provide disaster relief following early summer storms, increase the use of renewable fuels abundant in Minnesota, increase conservation of Minnesota wetlands, give smaller rural hospitals a competitive edge when competing for federal grants, and invest billions of dollars into small-town infrastructure through my Rural Renaissance Bill.

These efforts are just a snapshot of the work I have done, and pledge to continue doing, to help maintain the strengths of Minnesota found in our rural communities. I firmly believe that although the challenges facing these areas are real, the people of rural Minnesota embody the values of hard work, family and community that are needed to address these challenges. The same values that drive families to get up early for church on Sunday mornings before heading into the field, factory or office are the values we need to build on as we work together to maintain and improve our rural communities.

To that end, I want to thank the Center for Rural Policy and Development for affording me the opportunity to be part of this inaugural edition of the *Rural Minnesota Journal*. It will undoubtedly serve as a critical resource for all of rural Minnesota in a time when it is especially important.

It is truly a great privilege to welcome this much-needed publication and, most importantly, to continue working together to ensure a bright future for all of rural Minnesota.



Born in Brooklyn, N.Y., **NORM COLEMAN** spent 17 years in the office of Minnesota's Attorney General before being elected mayor of St. Paul in 1993. In 1996, Coleman made the controversial switch to the Republican Party, before being re-elected mayor the next year.

In 1998 Coleman ran for governor and narrowly lost to Independence Party candidate Jesse Ventura. In 2002, after his term as mayor ended, he entered the race for the U.S. Senate against incumbent Senator Paul Wellstone. After Senator Wellstone's tragic death eleven days before the election, Coleman won a close election against Wellstone's replacement, former Vice President Walter Mondale.

Coleman serves on the Senate Agriculture Committee, where in the fall of 2003 he introduced the Rural Renaissance Act. He also founded and is now co-chairman of the bipartisan Senate Biofuels Caucus. He serves as Chairman of the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee's Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, as a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and also chairs the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere. Coleman is also a member of the Senate Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee.

Coleman attended Hofstra University on Long Island and received his law degree from the University of Iowa Law School. He and his wife, Laurie, have two children, Jacob and Sarah.