

CENTER *for* RURAL POLICY and DEVELOPMENT

MANKATO • MINNESOTA

Seeking Solutions for Greater Minnesota's Future

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Redistricting and Rural Minnesota

The waiting is over: the new map of Minnesota's political landscape is out.

Redistricting, the exercise that takes place every ten years to even up the population in each legislative and congressional district after the U.S. Census is taken, reveals the state's population changes. As expected, this year's redistricting reflects the continuing migration of the state's residents from rural to urban areas, reflected in the shift of legislative districts toward the metro. In 1961, there were five counties in the Twin Cities' Metropolitan Statistical Area, represented by 51 legislators out of 199. The 2002 redistricting places 108 out of the state's 201 legislators in the Twin Cities seven-county metro area, three more than in the 1992 redistricting.

"I would call this a significant loss for Greater Minnesota," said John Sundvor, a lobbyist for the Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities. "This is an area that needs more representation, not less."

Minnesota neglected to reapportion its districts from 1913 until the 1960 Census, when it was ordered to do so by the State Supreme Court. The imbalance that had developed up to that point caused what some considered an undue influence for rural legislators as the population shifted to the Twin Cities after World War II but the legislative districts did not change proportionately.

This year, as has been the practice since 1962, the Supreme Court's special redistricting task force confirmed its own set of district maps when the Republicans, Democrats and Independence parties could not agree on a map by the deadline of March 19. The court's plan received general approval for being fair to parties and populations.

"I think it's good," said Bill Walsh, a spokesman for the state Republican Party. "It's not the plan we submitted, but [the redistricting plan] recognizes that there's been a demographic shift of more people to the suburbs. It's fair."

Besides the fact that the legislative districts have slid a little more towards the Twin Cities, there is concern over the loss of experience and seniority among rural legislators. In Greater Minnesota, incumbent legislators are facing off in 11 House seats and six Senate seats, sometimes of the same party, sometimes not. Since only one can win, that would mean a loss of experience and seniority in those areas. Some have already declared they will move to get back among their old constituents or into a nearby open seat. There nine open House seats and five open Senate seats in Greater Minnesota.

Jack Uldrich, chairman of the state Independence Party, sees the open seats as a good thing.

"The large number of open seats means the court didn't take into account partisan politics to protect incumbents." And of course those open seats give Independence Party candidates an improved chance at the polls, Uldrich pointed out.

Greater Minnesota is already losing experienced legislators. Senate Majority Leader Roger Moe is running for governor, ending his 32-year stint in the Senate. Doug Johnson, from Tower in northern Minnesota, who has

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Best Practices Will Be Focus of New Ethnic Diversity Project

Over the last two years the Center for Rural Policy and Development has produced research highlighting the profound influx of immigrants into many of rural Minnesota's cities and towns. Following up on that research, the Center is now partnering with the League of Minnesota Cities on a new project to develop a "tool kit" for rural communities seeking resources to help them adjust to their rapidly changing population.

During the 1990s the immigrant and non-white population of rural Minnesota increased dramatically. Now many of these communities are feeling tension. Some are trying to address the issues, while others are thinking about where to start, said Center president Jack Geller.

The focus of this new project will be on identifying "best practices" around the state that can be used by schools and local governments. Both of these groups are experiencing numerous challenges in working with their immigrant communities. In schools, some of the issues is a very high drop-out rate, particularly among Latino students, isolation and learning English. With city and county governments, there are the issues of housing and tension between minorities, the police and the rest of the community.

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Rural Perspectives

Steve Wenzel

Minnesota State Director
USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT



Q *What have been your first priorities as you come in as the new state director?*

A As the new state director my first priority has been to learn about the organization and meet the 124 professional staff located throughout the state. USDA Rural Development in Minnesota has been a highly successful organization in improving the lives of the people of rural Minnesota. I want to continue this effort and build upon this great record. In fiscal year 2001 we funded approximately \$230 million worth of loans, loan guarantees, and grants in rural Minnesota. Rural Development's resources are multi-faceted. USDA Rural Development has so many diverse responsibilities.

The organization is basically divided into four areas. Rural Development provides funding resources for housing, businesses and cooperatives, community facilities and rural infrastructure, like water and wastewater. Also, there is a Community and Cooperative Development section that provides technical assistance. If a rural community, business or citizen has a need, I would encourage them to contact us. If we cannot help them with our resources, we will assist them in finding which of our many partners — state and local governments, tribal governments, non-profits, or for-profit businesses — can help them.

Our staff is located in 16 offices throughout the state, as well as several home-based employees. I am making it a priority to visit each of those offices during my first year, and I have made good progress! Indeed, it is people that make up a high performing organization. It is my hope to ensure that our Rural Development staff continues to have the tools, the resources and support they need in order to continue to do an outstanding job.

Q *Tell us a little about your background. What do you think in your experience has prepared you for this job?*

A I have spent my whole life in the central part on the state — Little Falls to be exact. I think that the experience of growing up on a family farm and being a rural Minnesotan all my life has provided me with first-hand knowledge of the strengths as well as the challenges faced by rural Minnesota.

Also, I represented that rural area, District 12B, for nearly 30 years in the Minnesota House of Representatives. During that time I was privileged to serve as the chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, and I served on numerous other committees, including Crime Prevention and Ways & Means. All of those experiences of representing the people provided me with a broad knowledge base of rural issues, who the players and partners are and a general sense of what works and what doesn't. It gave me a hands-on education of the depth and breadth of rural issues that I now deal with on a daily basis at USDA Rural Development.

Q *What is Rural Development's mission in today's rural America?*

A President George W. Bush has presented a set of agricultural policy principles, including those for USDA Rural Development, that seek to enhance the quality of life in rural America. I strongly support the President's vision for a strong and prosperous rural America. U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman has released the document "Taking Stock for the New Century," which outlines the general thrust of President Bush's policies on agriculture and rural development. It is very clear from these principles that the effort and programs of USDA Rural Development will play an ever-increasing role in the economic livelihoods of the people and communities of rural America.

The key mission of USDA Rural Development is to help the people of rural America develop strong and sustainable communities and improve their quality of life. This policy will not only continue, but we will work to expand and improve upon past achievements for the benefit of families and communities throughout rural Minnesota.

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Redistricting...

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been chair of the Senate Tax Committee many years, will be retiring. The death of Sam Solon of Duluth meant the loss of another influential member.

Redistricting at the Congressional level has been perhaps a more dramatic change. Departing from the traditional 4-4 split — four districts in the Twin Cities and one district anchoring each corner of the state, the court changed the map to a 3-5 split: there will now be five districts in the Twin Cities, one district each in northwest and northeast Minnesota, and one district stretching the length of southern Minnesota, from Wisconsin to South Dakota.

Bill Amberg, spokesman for the Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party, said the new plan is more or less fair, but they are disappointed at the loss of the Congressional district. He also pointed out, though, that this round of redistricting shouldn't signal the end of influence for Greater Minnesota in the political process. Representation depends on the individual elected, and the best public policy is achieved when lawmakers consider the state as a whole and all its residents.

There is no questioning the fact that rural Minnesota lost one "rural" member of Congress. But the Independence Party's Uldrich thinks there may be a positive in this for rural Minnesota: the rural districts are now

more rural than they were before. They no longer include the suburbs, and whoever represents them will be representing rural interests, not both rural and suburban, said the Independence Party's Uldrich.

Sundvor, on the other hand, doesn't see it quite the same way. Under the old arrangement, at least rural and suburban issues had to be studied and addressed by the same voters and the same candidates. The new arrangement, said Sundvor, simply "isolates suburbanites from rural issues. They won't understand each other."

Greater Minnesota is not ready to throw in the towel, however, said Sundvor. "What this does mean is that rural Minnesota has to be very careful about what people we send to the Capitol. They have to understand rural issues and be activists, not just sit quietly in their seats."

Legislators in the Twin Cities and in the rest of Minnesota

	1961	1992	2002
Twin Cities	51	105	108
Rural Minnesota	148	96	93
Total	199	201	201

2002 Small Grants Recipients Named

The primary focus of the Center for Rural Policy and Development is sound, objective research on rural issues, and one means the Center has developed to encourage that research is through its Small Grants Program. Each year the Center solicits proposals from researchers around the state to develop projects on rural policy issues.

The Center for Rural Policy and Development is pleased to announce the recipients of its Small Grants Program for 2002:

- Joe Folsom, St. Cloud State University and USDA Rural Development, "Economic Input/Output Study of Cooperatives in Minnesota"
- Anthony Schaffhauser, Bemidji State University, "Economic Impact of Non-Profit Organizations in Northwest Minnesota"
- Margaret Villanueva, St. Cloud State University, "Improving Communications: Latina Immigrants in Central Minnesota, Needs and Assets"
- Ann Ziebarth, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, "Affordable Housing Development and Employer Involvement"

This year the Center received its largest number of applications yet. The smaller funding size (not more than \$10,000 per project) allows the Center to fund a number of projects, leading to a greater variety of research topics. Projects in the past have resulted in reports on such topics as the state of health care insurance in western Minnesota, the teacher shortage and the impact of per-pupil funding formulas on rural Minnesota, and immigrants in rural Minnesota's communities.

Notes

Rural Summit

For more information on the 2002 Rural Summit: Linking Health and Economic Development, visit the web site at www.minnesotaruralpartners.org or call the Minnesota Center for Rural Health at 218-727-9390.



Legislative Wrap-Up Will Appear on Web Site

This year the Center will be providing a review of the 2002 legislative session on the Center's web site shortly after the session ends. The wrap-up will discuss the bills that became law, those that didn't and what effect these issues could have on rural Minnesota. Some of the key legislation this session includes:

- Biodiesel minimum content requiring that the diesel fuel supply for the entire state contain at least a 2-percent blend of biodiesel fuel by 2005 if processors can meet capacity requirements.
- Twins stadium: After all these years, there could be a meeting of the minds on how to fund a new stadium for the Minnesota Twins.
- Rural economic development: In conference committee, both the House and Senate versions of this bill carry substantial funding for economic development projects in Greater Minnesota.
- Minnesota Extension faces budget cuts and a redirection in its mission.

Watch for the wrap-up on our web site at www.ruralmn.org.

Rural Perspectives

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Q *How does rural Minnesota differ from the rest of rural America and how is it similar?*

A Minnesota is usually on the cutting edge of problem solving when it comes to rural issues. As a state, we have long been viewed as an innovator and leader in rural development. We are blessed with people and a variety of organizations that care deeply about rural Minnesota and invest much of their time and many resources in it. In the past two decades, Minnesota has seen a marked increase in the population growth of its suburbs and regional cities such as Rochester and St. Cloud. This fact presents a whole set of consequences that we will be dealing with for some time.

However, Minnesota faces many of the same challenges that the rest of rural America faces. We struggle with the changing role of agriculture in the rural countryside. We are challenged to provide greater technological services, such as high speed Internet access, to all corners of the state to enable economic development. Minnesotans, long concerned with the environment, wonder what the best use of our land is as our suburban population grows. Increasing diversity provides us new assets and at the same time new challenges. The issues of workforce and healthcare will continue to have a huge impact on many sectors of our state as the post-World War II generation continues to age.

Q *How does USDA Rural Development, a federal agency operating statewide, address the different regions of Minnesota with their different strengths and weaknesses?*

A Our state has been a diverse one from the first days of its settlement. Not only is our cultural heritage diverse, but so are our landscapes, from the forests and mining industries to the farms and prairies. USDA Rural Development has 16 local field offices located throughout the state. These offices are managed and staffed by people who live in the rural communities they serve. I know of no better way to be aware of and sensitive to local and regional strengths and differences than to have the people who do our work and make the decisions be local.

Q *How has our rural economy been affected by the recent economic downturn? Does it change USDA Rural Development's role or strategies at all?*

A I think that the rural economy has been affected by the recession. There already is a general "tightening of the belt." The impact of our state's budget deficit will be felt by every citizen and every community, rural and urban.

I do not see the recession changing USDA Rural Development's roles or strategies. What I do anticipate is the potential for increased demand for our services and funds. If funding from other partners, especially state agencies, decreases due to the state budget deficit, the void will need to be filled. The projects to solve urgent needs, such as clean water, health clinics, fire halls, jobs and economic development through new or expanded businesses, or decent housing for individuals and families in rural Minnesota will not go away. For these reasons, we may have to better prioritize USDA Rural Development funding in a way that is both more effective and targets both our financial and technical resources to the areas of greatest need.

Too often when those of us in rural Minnesota discuss the many challenges we face in our rural communities, we contrast them with those in urban and suburban communities. This urban vs. rural analysis is quite common when discussing the challenges of economic development, access to health care, the deployment of broadband technology—the list goes on and on. But while such contrasts help us highlight rural concerns, it can often lead us to overlook our common challenges. So my question to you today is this: What do the rural communities of Sleepy Eye, Mountain Lake, Long Prairie and Tracy have in common with the suburban communities of Lino Lakes, Lakeville and Oakdale and the urban communities of Hopkins and Brooklyn Center? Give up yet?

Well, the answer is that according to the 2000 Census, all of these communities, rural, urban and suburban have experienced at least a 250-percent increase in their minority population in the past 10 years. In fact, this is just a very short list of the dozens and dozens of communities all across the state that have experienced rapid demographic change since 1990. And as we have learned since the release of the 2000 Census data, primarily due to international and secondary immigration, Minnesota's "non-white" population essentially has doubled from 6 percent to approximately 12 percent in the past 10 years.

This statewide explosion of color, ethnicity and culture has led many school districts, city governments and social service agencies to reflect upon this profound transformation from once culturally homogeneous communities to truly diverse communities. More importantly, communities, both rural and urban are developing strategies to ensure that these "new Minnesotans" have access to the services they need, from educational services in the schools to city services on Main Street. A sampling of these strategies include a Welcome Center in Austin, a Multicultural Resource Center in Rochester and a multicultural library in St. James.

From the anecdotal evidence I have collected over the past year, it appears that many city councils have invested a substantial amount of time trying to figure out how best to reach out to their new residents, trying to answer the question, "How can we help these new residents understand how things work around here?" This is not only natural, but also considerate. After all, garbage won't get picked up if you don't set it out on the right day. You're less likely to get emergency assistance if you don't know about dialing 911. And kids will certainly be late to school if they reach the corner 10 minutes after the bus has left. Simply put—in order to access services, you have to know how things work.

On Common Challenges

by Jack M. Geller
President
Center for Rural Policy
and Development

"Everything from what time our school day starts to local parking regulations is culturally based."

Much less often a different question is asked: "How can we modify our services and service delivery to meet the needs of our changing population?" Such a shift in thinking requires us to recognize that most of the systems of services that we have developed in our communities were based upon our collective cultural norms, in other words, inherited from our ancestors. Everything from what time our school day starts to local parking regulations is culturally based. So is it reasonable to ask, as our communities become bi-cultural, or multi-cultural, do we need to reassess how we do things around here?

It reminds me of a conversation I recently had with a rural physician friend of mine who was telling me how her patient load was becoming increasingly Hispanic. Knowing that she was reasonably fluent in Spanish, I remarked that it must be quite helpful being able to converse with her patients in their native language. She replied that while being able to speak Spanish was clearly helpful, what really

helped the most was to learn the cultural underpinnings of her patients' health beliefs. Without understanding what it means to be healthy or ill in their culture, all she could do is deliver modern Western medicine in the Spanish language. But by understanding the cultural context of their health beliefs, she can modify her practice and consequently be much more effective in reaching and ultimately treating her Hispanic patients.

It made me wonder about how many communities are trying to approach their ethnic immigrant populations from this same perspective. By that I mean instead of figuring out how to teach new residents "how things work around here," trying to figure out how existing services can be modified to coincide with the cultural underpinnings of these new residents. I wonder how many local library boards are discussing what percentage of their library holdings should be in other languages? How many police departments are seeking cultural awareness training? How many park and recreation departments are exploring multicultural recreational programs other than soccer? How many public works departments are discussing how to provide service schedules in alternate languages? And how many city councils are looking to appoint some of these new residents to planning and zoning commissions, library boards and other positions of leadership? Some may be.

So my point is simply this: The task of constructively addressing ethnic diversity and rapid demographic change is not an urban, rural or suburban one. Rather, it's a Minnesota issue. Communities all over the state are tackling this important issue with an eye toward the future. The ability to look at old tasks in new ways isn't always easy, but we can all learn from each other. Just ask.



Best Practices Will Be Focus...

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The project will be a process of identification, of the issues, the potential solutions, those who need help and those who can help. The Center and the League of Minnesota Cities have identified cities experiencing a rapid growth in their non-white population. The next step will be to identify the issues that are causing tensions in these cities and to decide whether they are idiosyncratic — unique to that community — or systemic, in other words, an issue that shows up across communities. The systemic issues are the ones this project will address, says Geller. It means that if that issue is showing up in a lot of the communities being looked at, it's fairly certain that issue will be occurring in other communities, too.

Once those issues are identified, researchers will conduct phone interviews with city and school officials to ask them what, if anything, they are doing to address these issues. This inventory will then go to an expert panel — people from around the state experienced in diversity issues in large communities and small ones — who will study the inventory to decide which of those policies and programs have the most promise.

Those that can be deemed "best practices" will go into the tool kit, forming a collection that can be shared with all communities through workshops, conferences and forums. These practices should show what communities can do to help both their new and old residents adjust, what role organizations, local government and individuals can play, and what action, if any, the state should take in helping local communities.

To be realistic, some cities and school districts will take to this idea of a tool kit better than others, but they need the opportunity to at least see what's being done elsewhere, says Geller.

"I think many people are aware that there are problems in their communities — they just don't know what to do about it. Giving them models and ideas about what others are doing in their own cities should be a start in filling those gaps."

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The Center for Rural Policy and Development's 2002 Legislative Policy Forum

Rural Minnesota's Water Resources

June 10-11

The Arrowwood Resort, Alexandria

The management of our water resources and the responsibility of being a headwaters state are critical to rural Minnesota's future. From drinking water to shoreland development, the policies crafted will have major impact. Rural Minnesota's Water Resources is a forum for legislators, local government officials, planners and others interested in the policy issues surrounding the management of water resources in rural Minnesota. The forum will feature sessions on:

- The supply and protection of drinking water
- Drainage and flood control
- The issues of wastewater treatment in small communities
- Shoreland development, issues and pressures
- A panel of water policy practitioners will discuss the current state of local water resources planning and the policy issues and challenges surrounding it

The keynote speaker will be **Michael J. Donohue, Ph.D.**, president and CEO of the Great Lakes Commission. Established in 1955, the Great Lakes Commission serves as a bi-national agency promoting the orderly, integrated

and comprehensive development, use and conservation of the Great Lakes Basin. Its members include the ten Great Lakes states and provinces.

A reception hosted by State District 10 legislators Sen. Cal Larson, Rep. Bud Nornes and Rep. George Cassell will take place the evening of June 10 at the Carlos Creek Winery near Alexandria.

The forum is presented in cooperation with:

Minnesota Planning
 USDA/Rural Development
 University of Minnesota
 Minnesota State University, Mankato
 West Central Initiative
 Mid Minnesota Development Commission
 Arrowhead Regional Development Commission

Watch for the brochure, coming soon, and check our web site for updated information.



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Letter

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