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## Growth & Justice celebrates ten years

A decade ago, Mark Zuckerberg was a Harvard freshman, still two years away from launching the website that would revolutionize communication worldwide. The top selling cellphone was the Nokia 6610, featuring a 1-inch color screen and the ability to retain a total of 75 text messages, similar to what today's teenager sends in a single day. Newly exposed corruption had brought down Wall Street titans Enron and WorldCom. Minnesota suffered the loss of progressive firebrand U.S. Senator Paul Wellstone in a plane crash.

And as 2002 came to an end, former Star Tribune publisher Joel Kramer launched

a new nonprofit think tank, with a goal of building a wider progressive consensus on public policy issues in Minnesota. A few months later, in March 2003, Growth & Justice made its public debut with a website launch and a broadly distributed commentary authored by Kramer, [A better and fairer way to deal with the state's budget crisis](#). The Star Tribune hailed the organization as "an especially welcome thing, at a time when too many Minnesota politicians are following divide and conquer strategies."



Through an especially trying decade of economic ups and downs, Growth & Justice has worked to advance progressive policies, using independent research, detailed reports, concise policy briefs, and illustrative op-ed pieces. We

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## Workforce equity for a competitive economy

It should be common knowledge by now that the Twin Cities region ranks among the worst metropolitan areas in racial disparities for unemployment and educational outcomes, and that the children and young adults on the wrong side of those statistics are our fastest growing demographic.

This is the most compelling long-term economic policy challenge in Minnesota, and it's long been a concern of Growth & Justice. To shine a light on this challenge and to find solutions, we launched a new series this spring that links together three inseparable imperatives: economic growth, workforce development, and equity.

In the coming months, as part of our [Workforce Equity for a Competitive Economy](#) initiative, Growth &

Justice will highlight workforce and economic development models that show real promise for reducing racial and economic disparities and ensuring shared growth and prosperity. We will engage workforce, education, nonprofit, public policy, and business leaders and will propose actionable ideas for an economic growth strategy that harnesses the talents and potential of this most valuable asset, our people.

The raw numbers are shocking. Among 19 large metropolitan regions with sizable black populations, the Twin Cities has the largest gap in unemployment between white and black workers. In 2011, nearly 18% of African Americans in the Twin Cities were unemployed—

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## 2013 Legislative session recap

Throughout the 2013 Legislative session, Growth & Justice worked to help shape policy and to exert a constructive influence for improving lives, growing jobs and strengthening our economy. Along with many partners and allies, we advocated for smart investments in education, transportation, and other public goods essential to our economy, as well as supporting responsible revenue-raising to pay for these investments.

### Early Education: MinneMinds

Growth & Justice joined MinneMinds, the research-grounded consortium of organizations and leaders with a common commitment to prioritizing Minnesota's youngest in-need children, which successfully advocated for quality pre-kindergarten scholarships for Minnesota's most vulnerable children. The Legislature invested \$46 million in this

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From the President



Dane Smith

# On Our 10th Anniversary

## Reflections on Progress and Persistence

I remember when Growth & Justice founder Joel Kramer and his staff released their first reports on tax policy in early 2003, calling for some business tax reductions, but also high-end income tax increases, in a combination that would have balanced the first of many budget shortfalls, promoted growth and produced a less regressive system overall.

As a journalist then, it struck me immediately that this serious and substantive effort to bridge the divide between private-sector and public-sector was a positive stroke of genius, and in the finest Minnesota tradition of constructive, pro-business, pro-government, progressive policymaking.

After more than a decade of unwise policy flowing from an unbalanced ideology, I believe we are turning the corner as a state, rising from stagnation and decline and the wrong directions on business growth and social justice indicators. And we humbly believe that our work at Growth & Justice has played an important part.

Consider: Before you receive our next newsletter in the fall, Minnesota will have a somewhat less regressive state-local tax structure, reflecting our

priority on fairness. The governor’s original budget proposal called for base-broadening and rate reductions for the sales tax for many businesses, a principle we embraced and that we are convinced will eventually prevail.

But far more important are new investments in human potential and physical infrastructure made possible by new revenues and the end of the no-new-taxes era. (The Star Tribune’s conservative op-ed editor actually pronounced “no new taxes” dead in a recent column).

Minnesota soon will be on its way to investing more in early childhood education, a high-return investment that we and leading business groups have supported whole-heartedly since our founding, and emphasized strongly in our signature [Smart Investments in Minnesota’s Students](#) report in 2008.

On the infrastructure front, rather than slowing or abandoning the transition to a cleaner and greener economy, Minnesota is now accelerating the build-out of its light-rail and transit systems, as well as healthier options for biking and pedestrian travel.

On the health care front, as a result of changes already enacted by this Legislature, individuals and small businesses will have easier access to more affordable health care coverage through the state’s new health insurance exchange. A path toward universal coverage and lowering costs for all Minnesotans is in sight.

By no means is all the progress happening only at the Legislature. Late last year, a powerful coalition of business, education and community groups launched Generation Next, a systematic and comprehensive effort to improve student success and post-secondary completion in the Twin Cities region. This model closely resembles our *Smart Investment in Minnesota’s Students* strategic framework. And the Itasca Group, a highly influential group of business leaders, is emphasizing anew the economic harm posed by race and income gaps

in education and employment. Our latest project, [Workforce Equity for a Competitive Economy](#), is sounding the same note.

It’s pretentious and absurd to suggest that we were the dominant force in effecting this evolution to more practical and more progressive policy in Minnesota. Many groups played influential roles. Working together with other dedicated organizations and individuals, Growth & Justice has helped policymakers, leaders and voters see the big picture—the inseparable relationship between economic justice and long-term economic health and growth.

It’s been a great privilege to lead this organization now for six years and more than half its lifetime, and I’m as enthused about our mission as I was the day I started. We have a dedicated staff, an outstanding board, a productive team of policy fellows and academics, and a steady supply of eager and hard-working interns. And your continued financial and moral support is one more essential ingredient for which I’m grateful, as we carry this important work into the next decade.

### Growth & Justice

- Growth & Justice is a research and advocacy organization that develops innovative public policy proposals based on independent research and civic engagement. We believe when Minnesota makes **smart investments in practical solutions** it leads to **broader prosperity** for all.

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Newsletter design & layout by  
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# Former Growth & Justice interns flourish in policy roles

As we celebrate our first decade, it's fitting to give special thanks for the dedicated interns Growth & Justice has welcomed since 2003, many of whom have gone on to carrying our brand of work forward in various ways.

These remarkable interns have been involved in everything we do: conducting research, writing reports, engaging in communications and outreach, planning events, raising funds, and performing routine administrative tasks. Some interns have shared authorship of policy briefs and others have been instrumental in our more memorable events. All of them have contributed in important ways.

One of the best parts of working with interns is seeing what they do next, as they finish their work with us and go on to employment throughout the public policy sphere, finding their place as influencers and advocates, here in Minnesota and beyond.

We wish we had room to describe the progress of all of the dozens of outstanding interns we've worked with over the years, but here are a few standouts that are contributing and flourishing.

**Mehmet "Memo" Berker:** Memo was brought on to help plan and organize our "Worst Political Advertising in America Awards" fundraising event in 2008. One of his many responsibilities was to cull through hours of political advertisements to produce the entertaining video of "Bad Ad" nominees that was featured at the event. He went on to intern for Sen. Amy Klobuchar, and then worked for two years building the Go Ramsey Communities interactive web map. Cartography is his passion and now he's a research analyst and program manager for Emerging Markets, Inc. in Los Angeles, which seeks to bring banks and supermarkets to underserved neighborhoods. "I was given the opportunity to contribute in meaningful ways to the or-



ganization—to actually use my brain, which is something you can't really say for most internships," Memo says of his time with us.

**Matt Burdick:** Currently the grassroots advocacy coordinator for the Minnesota affiliate of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, Matt is at the Capitol seeking funding for school-linked grants and placing more mental health professionals in our schools. His work fits well with the education strategy that Growth & Justice was developing when Matt interned in 2007 and 2008, and our emphasis on a comprehensive approach that includes support outside of the classroom to improve school success. "I was always a political junkie, Matt says, "but my internship at Growth & Justice really sparked an interest in public policy and finding solutions through the sausage-making of the legislative process."

**Amelia Cruver:** Amelia was an essential contributor to our education policy work, researching and co-authoring briefs on education success in Cincinnati and in Montgomery County, Maryland. Following her internship, she served a stint as a Teach for America curriculum coordinator and then landed a great job as a senior policy analyst for the Governor's Workforce Development Council. The work of this nonpartisan advisory panel closely aligns with Growth & Justice's strategic principles and prescriptions for increasing postsecondary completion and closing race and income gaps in the workforce.



**Drew Henry:** After an internship with Growth & Justice that included important research work on the value of public investments in rural Minnesota, Drew quickly found a job on the campaign of a Ramsey County Attorney candidate and then served on Gov. Mark Dayton's winning gubernatorial campaign. Before



long, he found employment with Tunheim, a leading public affairs and communications consulting group in Minnesota. Drew is at the helm of an important legislative initiative, one near and dear to Growth & Justice for many years, as the campaign manager of the "MinneMinds" initiative, backed by Growth & Justice and a large coalition of groups seeking a major expansion of high-quality early childhood education opportunities for needy families. "Growth & Justice gave me a great introduction to public policy and the political process in Minnesota," says Drew.

**Kristina Krull:** A Growth & Justice intern during the summer of 2009, Kristina was known for her general excellence in researching nearly any topic. After her internship,



she went on to graduate school at La Follette School of Public Affairs. While attending, she interned with the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, and was co-director of operations for the student organization EDGE (Empowerment through Development and Gender Equality). Kristina was the recipient of the Pennington Prize in 2011 for her paper "Reducing Obesity: Options for Promoting Better Food Choices." Following her graduation, she returned to Minnesota, accepting a position as a management analyst with the Office of Planning and Analysis for Dakota County. "Growth & Justice introduced me to the world of public policy and helped me start along a career path in public service," Kristina says about her time with us.

**Kevin McNellis:** Currently a graduate student at UC-Berkeley's Goldman School of Public Policy, Kevin has served as a teaching assistant for former Labor Secretary Robert Reich, one of our nation's preeminent progressive policy leaders (who also keynoted an early Growth & Justice event.) Between his G&J internship and Berkeley, Kevin was a researcher in Montana at the National Institute

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# 2013 Legislative session update

*continued from page 1*

program, which is based on the model developed by the Minnesota Early Learning Foundation and which also forms the foundation of the state's successful federal Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant. Scholarships will be available to 3- and 4-year-olds and their younger siblings, with the children of teen parents a high priority. The new legislation will help nearly 9,000 children attend a Parent Aware-rated quality early learning program of their choice in their community.

**K-12 Education: Creating the most competitive workforce in the world** Early in the session, Rep. Marquart, House E-12 education committee chair, met with us to discuss our foundational Smart Investments in Minnesota's Students report and his plans to use it as a resource for shaping education policy. The result was the House E-12 omnibus bill and Marquart's vision for getting "every kid in this state on the path to the world's best workforce." The bill invests in children at all stages on the education continuum by funding such provisions as free all-day kindergarten starting in 2015, Minnesota Math Corps to help elementary and middle school students meet state standards, special

education, career and technical aid, and regional Centers of Excellence to help schools increase achievement rates. The final bill increases E-12 education funding by \$485 million in the FY 2014-15 biennium.

## Higher Education

The Higher Education omnibus bill signed by Governor Dayton includes an additional \$250 million for higher education in the next biennium. There will be a two-year freeze on tuition at MnSCU and the University of Minnesota, and an increase of \$46 million for the Minnesota State Grant program. The bill also included the Minnesota Dream Act, which will allow undocumented students to pay resident tuition rates at state public colleges and universities, and to qualify for state financial aid.

## Transportation & Infrastructure

As part of the Transit for a Stronger Economy coalition, Growth & Justice joined with more than 50 allies seeking a comprehensive transportation bill which includes metro area funding for transit, walking, and biking, and also includes significant funding for roads and bridges. In the end, the coalition did not win an increase in

the regional sales tax to fund transit, but smaller gains included language that facilitates efforts by MnDOT and the Met Council to work more closely with community-based employment assistance firms and training facilities to meet hiring goals set by the state's Human Rights department.

## Invest in Minnesota

Growth & Justice is a committed partner in the Invest in Minnesota coalition of faith, nonprofit and labor leaders, adding our voice to the call for increased revenue for needed investments, and a fairer tax system. After more than a decade of damaging spending cuts, this year the Legislature passed a tax bill that will generate critical revenue for essential investments. The bill creates a new income tax tier for the state's wealthiest households, repeals some tax breaks for companies operating outside the United States, increases tobacco taxes, and helps modernize the state's outdated sales tax system, by taxing some digital goods and by requiring some online retailers to collect sales taxes. Minnesota's residents and the state's economy all stand to benefit from this progressive improvement to our tax system.

*continued from page 1*

## Workforce development

more than three times the share of whites out of work. Even before the height of the recession, in 2007, the black unemployment rate in the Twin Cities metro was nearly 14%.

As troubling as these disparities are from a moral perspective, the threats they pose to economic growth and competitiveness are equally unacceptable. Minnesota, like the country as a whole, has a younger population that is dramatically more diverse than the older population. As baby boomers retire in great numbers, the economic engine driving our economy forward will be fueled by an increasingly diverse younger group of workers.

Yet racial and income-level achievement gaps in education contribute to a dire situation in Minnesota, where

people of color are overrepresented among those who lack the credentials and job skills employers increasingly require. Just 40% of working-age adults in the state currently have a postsecondary degree, but in the coming decade, 70% of Minnesota jobs are projected to require education beyond high school. We know we need to improve our education and training systems to raise high school graduation rates and postsecondary completion rates if we are going to produce the skilled future workforce our economy demands.

Effective and innovative work already is occurring locally and nationwide around economic and workforce development practice, planning, and integration. Minnesotans have taken notice of, and are responding

to, the range of factors contributing to racial inequities in employment. There is promise for progress in initiatives like the Phillips Sectoral Employment Initiative, the Blue Ribbon Commission to Reduce Racial Disparities, the Itasca Project Socioeconomic Disparities Task Force, the Everybody In Task Force, and others designed to create employment pathways for groups underrepresented in our labor market.

Our project on [\*Workforce Equity for a Competitive Economy\*](#) will help give policymakers the knowledge and best examples for developing an employment equity agenda, with superior workforce training that leads to economic growth for our region and its residents.

# Celebrating ten years

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have worked with engaged citizens, business leaders, policy advocates and elected officials alike in finding solutions to the challenges facing our state. We've also broken down the myth that progressive policy is the brand of one political party, bringing Republicans, Democrats and Independence Party members to common ground on a variety of topics.

Our work has covered a wide range of issues important to Minnesota's quality of life, including education, fiscal discipline and accountability, infrastructure, fair taxation, and workforce development. We've made the case that policy can be both pro-business and pro-worker, that investments made now will affect our state's economy for a generation, and that when work at the Capitol is focused on improving our economy instead of improving reelection chances, everybody wins. We've even taken some time to have some fun at the expense of politics as usual, with our *Worst Political Advertising in America* events.

In celebration of this big milestone, we've freshened up our look. Our new logo emphasizes that bold



ideas like economic growth and economic justice are possible, and even more likely, when linked together. Our new website makes it easier to access the decade's worth of research and recommendations Growth & Justice has compiled, and better shares our message through blog and social media platforms. We hope you enjoy the bright, clean, and easy-to-read look of the new site, which is still found at [growthandjustice.org](http://growthandjustice.org).

While you're there, visit the special section, Celebrating 10 Years, featuring many of the events and milestones of the organization's first decade.

We enter our second decade determined to build on our work and progress. We are grateful for the hard work and generosity of thousands of Minnesotans who have shared and supported our vision over the last ten years, and hope you'll continue this progressive journey with us.

# Interns

*continued from page 3*

on Money in State Politics, where he studied the effects of campaign contributions on public policy. He says of his G&J experience in 2009: "Not only did I see first-hand how the Legislature operated, I learned how to produce rigorous nonpartisan evidence-based policy analysis, and developed my expertise on a variety of state and federal education policies. Growth & Justice's philosophy... continues to inform my own work, and the internship was instrumental in launching my career."

**Colin O'Keefe:** An energetic and motivated intern, Colin moved quickly from his internship to a job as a full-time research assistant at the Improve Group, an independent evaluation firm based in St. Paul. He's on a team of five researchers working on multi-year grant with the Minnesota Department of Human Services, assisting staff in the evaluation of a waiver program that gives low-income, disabled individuals an alternative to living in a hospital or institution. His team is traveling to every county conducting case file reviews, focus groups, and interviews. Colin says, "The phone interviews I did for [a research project] for Growth & Justice, and attending the various networking conferences, definitely made me more comfortable talking to people in a business-like setting. That rich internship experience made a difference in my career path."

**Alex Timian:** After doing exemplary work researching health care issues for us, Alex found work researching health care policy for other organizations. Alex currently works in New York City as an investigator for the highly regarded Mintz Group, which he describes as "collecting hidden business facts to assist clients before relationships, during disputes, and after frauds." One of the organization's specialties is monitoring bribery in international foreign business dealings. Alex remains interested in health care and Minnesota, and looks forward to a time when Minnesota provides universal coverage through a unified public financing system, as outlined in our 2012 report, *Beyond the Affordable Care Act*.

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## Van Jones inspires G&J supporters

Our founding premise is that Minnesota must drive constructively toward a stronger economy, one that works better for middle-income and disadvantaged households, and one that also improves rather than degrades our physical environment. In keeping with that theme, Van Jones was the perfect speaker for our 10th anniversary fundraising event. Jones is an internationally recognized pioneer in human rights and clean energy innovation, and the president and co-founder of Rebuild the Dream, a think tank that advocates for economic justice. He has written two New York Times bestsellers: *The Green Collar Economy*, a definitive book on green jobs, and *Rebuild the Dream*, a visionary roadmap

for progressives. In his address to our contributors and supporters on May 19 at Unity Unitarian Church in St. Paul, Jones congratulated the Minnesota Legislature for bold new investments and policies promoting renewable energy and for the "ban-the-box" legislation that removes a barrier to good jobs for too many. While praising these accomplishments, he also called for a concerted effort to rebuild our infrastructure, reduce inequities in employment and training, and create a cleaner and more sustainable world for our children. Jones closed with a hopeful note about the potential for "millennials," our youngest generation, to drive policies, resources and knowledge that will lead to a better economic system.

### THANK YOU TO THE GENEROUS SPONSORS WHO HELPED MAKE THIS EVENT HAPPEN!

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