



# GROWTH & JUSTICE

CENTER FOR A PROSPEROUS, FAIR, AND SUSTAINABLE MINNESOTA ECONOMY

Volume 14

Spring 2011

## A little willpower and know-how, and a “Moon Shot” for higher education attainment

**F**ifty years ago, a young president set an audacious goal of landing a man on the moon within one decade. It was a bold proposal that sounded impossible, but most Americans understood that it could advance the nation’s technological and economic leadership for decades to come. Through a convergence of political will and scientific know-how, that goal was accomplished with five months to spare.



Source: NASA

Our top priority for Minnesota rivals the moon shot for audacity: We think our young adults ought to be the most educated in the world by the end

of this decade. And with a similar combination of will and knowledge, we expect this mission to be accomplished as well.

According to a study by the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, by the year 2018, 70 percent of jobs in Minnesota will require post-high school education. Minnesota’s current higher education attainment rate falls short of this mark by about 20 percentage points. The Georgetown study underlines what Growth & Justice

has been saying for years – that Minnesota needs to commit to increasing the share of students who successfully complete education beyond high school. And we have a goal of reaching a 75 percent attainment rate by the year 2020. Reaching that goal likely would make us first among the 50 states, and it dovetails well with President Obama’s end-of-decade national goal of returning to a first-in-the-world ranking in college graduation rates.

This is ambitious, but far from impossible. Political will is building on all sides, with the Minnesota business community calling for a “world-class education system” to prepare Minnesotans for the economy of tomorrow. Foundations across the state

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## New G & J report identifies innovative approaches to ease traffic congestion

**M**innesota’s strategy for addressing traffic congestion in the Twin Cities area must emphasize practical and innovative approaches for managing existing highway capacity, using transit, and affecting land-use patterns instead of depending on major roadway expansions, according to a new Growth & Justice transportation report.

The report on [\*Shifting Gears to Ease Congestion: Improving Travel and Travel Choices in the Twin Cities Area\*](#) notes that Minnesota is shifting gears in its approach to traffic congestion – a shift that lines up well with a number of realities.

The first reality is that congestion has grown worse despite the fact that the region is already home to more highway miles per capita than most comparable metro areas. This is due in large part to the iron law of congestion: An expanded highway reverts to its previous level of congestion as it attracts new travelers and those formerly discouraged from

*continued on page 3*

## Cincinnati school district raises graduation rate and eliminates gap

**G**rowth & Justice produced a [case study report](#) and [brief](#) in January outlining the experience of Cincinnati Public Schools as proof that major district-wide gains in high school graduation rates are possible for all students.

The write-ups document how Cincinnati committed to progress and implemented strategies that produced remarkable increases in overall graduation rates and completely eliminated the difference in rates between African American and white students.

In 2000, Cincinnati set out to increase the overall graduation rate to 75% by 2005 and cut the racial graduation gap in half. These goals were met and exceeded.

Strategies that helped drive the success there included teaching teams in the schools, student-based

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## GROWTH & JUSTICE

Our mission is to make Minnesota’s economy simultaneously more prosperous and fair. We are a non-partisan advocate for fair taxation and “smart” public investment — fiscally responsible, accountable investment that advances prosperity for all Minnesotans. We believe a sustainable economy provides the foundation for a just society.

GROWTH & JUSTICE  
2324 University Ave. W.  
Suite 120A  
Saint Paul, MN 55114  
phone: 651-917-6037  
fax: 651-641-7223  
email: [info@growthandjustice.org](mailto:info@growthandjustice.org)  
[www.growthandjustice.org](http://www.growthandjustice.org)

Newsletter layout: Mark Tundel

## Letter from the President

By Dane Smith

“A t the tables” might be an overarching theme for our work these days – an apt description of the breadth and depth of our work in recent months.

From our support of innovative government redesign concepts introduced by the House and Senate majorities, to our significant input in shaping education and infrastructure investment policy for the new administration, to our role as a networker and partner among nonprofit and other community and good-government groups, we are indeed moving between a lot of tables these days.

Here’s a partial list of our presence at tables, forums, and working groups so far this year:

- We were recently appointed by Commissioner Brenda Cassellius to the state Department of Education’s Working Group on School Funding, a panel that includes legislators, superintendents, school board members and other education stakeholders.
- We participated in a February presentation sponsored by the African American Leadership Forum and the University of Minnesota’s Consortium for Post-Secondary Academic Success, by the national group Strive Together. Strive emphasizes a model for education investment that is very much like our own *Smart Investments<sup>SM</sup> in Minnesota’s Students*, focusing on the pathway from birth to career launch.
- Our input on education, transportation, and economic development policy is frequently sought by decision-makers at the Capitol. We’ve been on the hill almost daily this year testifying before committees, advancing our education agenda, voicing support for tax fairness and a balanced approach to solving the budget crisis, and strongly urging legislators to rethink proposals that would dramatically slash

valuable public investments in transit, higher education and health care.

- We continue serving on the steering committee of the Invest in Minnesota campaign, a joint effort by religious, labor and nonprofit groups to push for a fair approach to budget-balancing and a more progressive tax mix for restoring lost revenues in our state budget.
- Continuing our partnership with an eclectic mix of policy groups, we co-sponsored a forum with the Center of the American Experiment and the Citizens League, among others, for a discussion of similarities and differences between Ronald Reagan and Hubert H. Humphrey, in this centennial year of their births (both here in the Upper Midwest.)
- Our strong presence at the news-media tables continues apace. I was a guest on Minnesota Public Radio’s Midmorning program discussing “snowbird taxes,” and participated in MPR’s online forum on education funding and redesign. We were the featured presenters at a couple of Twin Cities Daily Planet community meetings on the budget, and have continued our steady presence in the Star Tribune, Pioneer Press, MinnPost, Capitol Report and the policy blogosphere in general.

Two adjectives we hear often about our role and our work are “thoughtful” and “prolific.” Our team is glad to be in demand at so many tables, bringing our reputation for the quality (and quantity) of our practical, progressive policy solutions. 📧

using the route. The added lanes can handle more travelers, but congestion continues.

The second is fiscal. A 2007 study from the Minnesota Department of Transportation and the Met Council estimated that more than \$40 billion in government funds would be needed to “solve” metro-area congestion by 2030 through major roadway expansions and related improvements – an amount that would require a \$2-per-gallon increase if the revenues were to come solely from the gas tax.

And a third factor is that Twin Cities travel time on average is not so bad, when the goal is reframed away from congestion during the trip to reaching the trip’s end point. When we crunched the numbers, we found that the 13-county Minneapolis-St. Paul region ranks second among the nation’s 25 largest metropolitan areas for its short average travel time to work — a much better showing than expected given our population size.

The Metropolitan Council’s recent transportation plan says flat out that,

because of constraints, highway system expansion will not eliminate congestion in the Twin Cities area or even significantly reduce it. And Mn/DOT’s plan also moves the Twin Cities further away from “attempting to build its way out of congestion by adding more highway lanes.”

Still, traffic delays have an economic cost and undermine the public’s return on investment from highways. So the new Growth & Justice report identifies policies and approaches that can slow the growth of congestion but don’t rely simply on laying more asphalt:

- *Managing the highway system* using metered ramps at freeway entrances, rapid response to traffic accidents, real-time information on expressway signs, managed and priced highway lanes (used now for MnPASS lanes on I-394 and I-35W), and, when necessary, lower-cost but high-impact highway construction projects.
- *Easing demand* by shifting away from solo commutes and travel during peak drive time or by get-

ting out of the car altogether and working from home, for example. Both expected increases in gas prices and continued congestion will likely encourage these actions by travelers.

- *Banking more on transit, biking and walking* to keep off our roads those cars that could otherwise push a crowded-but-flowing lane into gridlock. Transit carries more people per vehicle in less space and in this way increases thoroughfare capacity.
- *Smarter land use* – More compact and mixed-use development allows people to reach destinations without driving cars for long distances or without driving at all. And the concentration of jobs sites in certain areas – think downtowns – makes cost-effective transit possible.

*Shifting Gears to Ease Congestion* and other reports from the Growth & Justice series on *Smart Investments<sup>SM</sup> in Transportation for Minnesota* are available for download at: <http://tinyurl.com/3z726y5>. ☞

## Meet the newest members of the G & J board of directors

### Vernae Hasbargen

A long-time Growth & Justice supporter, Vernae served on the Invest for Real Prosperity steering committee, the *Smart Investments<sup>SM</sup> in Minnesota’s Students* steering committee, and was an original signer of our 2006 Star Tribune full-page ad calling for adequate revenue and tax fairness. Vernae is the former legislative director for the Minnesota Rural Education Association and has served on numerous boards including the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits, MinnPost and ClearWay Minnesota.

### Maureen Ramirez

Maureen is currently the executive director of the CapitolRiver Council in downtown St. Paul, which advocates on behalf of all members in the downtown community to ensure citizen participation to support a safe, clean,

vibrant neighborhood and a healthy economic community. Previously Maureen served as director of the Minnesota Civic Engagement Table, and also spent six years working at the University of Minnesota, primarily with first generation students and low-income families. Maureen served on the steering committee for *Smart Investments<sup>SM</sup> in Minnesota’s Students*. And in 2007, Maureen became the first Latina, first UMD student and first non-traditional student to be elected by the state legislature to serve on the Board of Regents of the University of Minnesota.

### Walter H. “Rocky” Rockenstein II

As an attorney with Faegre & Benson, Rocky has represented many major corporate and governmental clients in Minnesota since the mid-1980s. He has concentrated in land use and zon-

ing law, environmental review and permitting, and building codes. Rocky has practiced before the Minnesota Legislature, state government agencies, the Metropolitan Council, counties, cities, townships, and special purpose local agencies such as watershed districts. He joined Faegre & Benson in 1984 following ten years of service as an elected member of the Minneapolis City Council. While a city council member, Rocky served on the Board of Directors of the League of Minnesota Cities and chaired the Environmental Quality Policy Committee of the National League of Cities.

*Growth & Justice would like to thank past board members whose tenure ended in 2010: Chris LaVictoire Mahai, Ross Levin and Tina Smith. We appreciate their service and wish them well.* ☞

are lining up behind initiatives on teacher quality and early childhood investment. Ideas are flowing from both sides of the aisle in Saint Paul, aimed at improving and redesigning our education system. And Growth & Justice offers the know-how needed to turn will into results.

Our [\*Smart Investment Agenda for Education in Minnesota\*](#) lays out a detailed plan to drive improvement across the education continuum and identifies top priorities for action by the state. Priorities include maintaining current funding for early childhood care and education, investing in proven strategies for ensuring grade-level reading proficiency by 3rd grade, establishing a clearinghouse for evaluating best practices and evidence-based innovations to improve achievement, and the top-level goal, for the state of Minnesota to make an official commitment to increasing the higher education attainment rate to 75 percent by the year 2020.

We know that increasing education attainment can strengthen economic growth, lower public costs, and raise the earnings power of families, but how can we ensure that our students are ready to succeed at the post-high school level? Growth & Justice has assembled a comprehensive list of proven, cost-effective ways to invest in our children to prime them for success at each age and stage. Here are just a few:

In the earliest years, visits to at-risk pregnant mothers and families with young children by nurses, social workers, and parent educators promote responsible parenting and healthy child development.

Among other tactics, small class sizes in kindergarten through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade have lasting positive effects through to high school graduation. And an early focus on reading along with other critical skills will reduce the need for costly special education classes and remedial instruction.

In grades 4 through 8, support outside of school connecting students with tutors and mentors will keep kids on track for secondary and post-secondary success.

Strategies for high school students include rigorous coursework with ongoing assessments, opportunities to gain college credit, reforms aimed at creating small learning communities within schools, additional high school counselors, drop-out prevention, and academic counseling focused on low income high-potential students.

Finally, an increase in the availability of need-based financial aid will make higher education possible for students with limited means.

The goal is bold, but necessary, the political will is gaining momentum, and the know-how is right at our fingertips. At stake is not only the success of our students – but the future success of our entire state. Click [here](#) to download our *Smart Investment Agenda for Education in Minnesota*. 

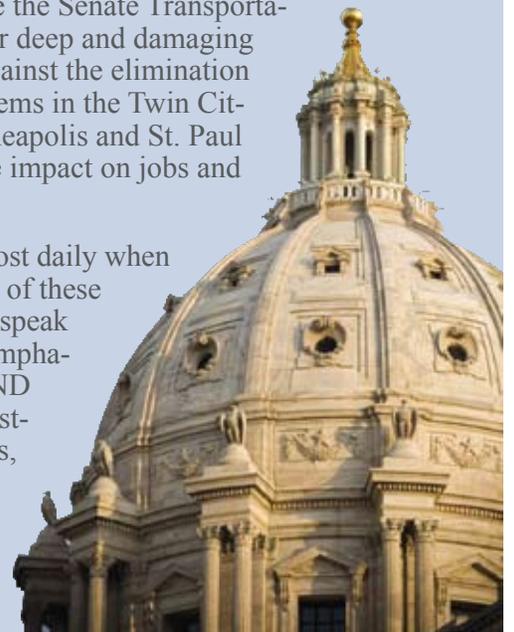
## Growth & Justice at the Capitol

Recently we stood up at a Capitol press conference with Republicans, DFLers and a wide array of interest groups in support of a pilot project for “Human Capital Performance Bonds,” a brand new idea to attract private investment to the most effective human service programs in the state. The concept was the brainchild of Steve Rothschild, leader of the non-profit group Twin Cities RISE!, which has worked with hundreds of young disadvantaged men to help them find jobs and build more productive lives.

A few days later we were testifying and engaging in a spirited but respectful disagreement with the chairman of the House Taxes Committee, as we made the case for closing loopholes and ending the abuse of foreign operating corporation tax havens. We also made the case for restoring balance to budget-balancing, rather than using a cuts-only approach, and raising needed revenue fairly.

About the same time, we were asked by our allies for infrastructure investment to testify before the Senate Transportation Committee against proposals for deep and damaging cuts to transit funding. We spoke against the elimination of state support for mass transit systems in the Twin Cities and statewide, joining with Minneapolis and St. Paul business leaders who argued that the impact on jobs and commerce would be unacceptable.

We find ourselves at the Capitol almost daily when it is in session this year. And at each of these hearings and at every opportunity to speak with policymakers, we continue to emphasize the themes of common sense AND public good, the value of public investment AND respect for business needs, the benefits of profits AND taxes, and the need to be respectful and to compromise to solve our problems and improve our condition. 



budgeting, more autonomy at the school level, and closer working relationships between students and teachers. The positive impacts of these reforms include increased college attendance by Cincinnati Public Schools graduates, and college readiness and retention also have improved.

Growth & Justice is researching school districts that have demonstrated success in raising school performance among students of color and writing case studies to help move Minnesota beyond excuses for why gaps exist to evidence that they can and must be narrowed and closed.

Progress in Cincinnati has been dramatic. In the Cincinnati Public Schools, graduation rates increased some 33 percentage points for African American students and about 25 percentage points for white students from 2000 to 2009 – a period when the minimum requirements for graduation increased. The graduation rate for low-income students for the

period from 2002 to 2009 rose about 22 percentage points.

In 2006 and 2007 the graduation rate for African American students exceeded that of white students by several percentage points. The rates have remained close since 2006.

Achievement on test scores also increased significantly from 2000 to 2009 for the CPS district as a whole.

The Minnesota-based Center for School Change played a key role in the reform effort from 2000 through 2007, helping to focus efforts on a limited number of clear goals and assisting with the transition of Cincinnati's high schools from ineffective to small and specialized.

Some of the reforms and approaches used to boost high school success in Cincinnati link with the proven strategies for educational improvement identified for the Growth & Justice initiative on *Smart Investments<sup>SM</sup> in Minnesota's Students*.

The Growth & Justice education recommendations that relate to the Cincinnati successes include:

- High school reforms and improvement initiatives that establish small learning communities within the schools, increase the rigor of the courses, offer academic support when needed, and better connect teachers with students and schools with parents.
- Rigorous coursework to ensure progress toward increased knowledge, high school graduation and opportunities for higher education.
- Tutoring assistance targeted to increase the academic success of low-performing students as they take rigorous coursework.
- Academic offerings that allow students to earn college credits while in high school.

Download the report and brief at: <http://tinyurl.com/4tf9762>. 

## Conversations continue on accountability and redesign

Every month for the last year and a half, we have been a regular attendee at an informal skull session called the Redesign Discussion Group. This group of experienced policy professionals includes several former leaders of the Citizens League and its current executive director, Sean Kershaw, along with an ever-changing cast that has included at times: Steven Rosenstone, the chancellor-designate of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system; Ember Reichgott Junge, chief advancement officer at Lutheran Social Services and a former state senator; Peter Hutchinson, president of the Bush Foundation; Peter Nelson, a policy researcher at the Center of the American Experiment; Mark Haveman, executive director of the Minnesota Taxpayers Association; and Dan Loritz, an ad-

ministrator and professor at Hamline University and a former top staffer in Gov. Rudy Perpich's administration. A key player in this group has been Ted Kolderie, who could well be considered a ringleader among policy wonks in Minnesota. Kolderie is a founding partner of the group Education|Evolving.

From the start, the purpose of the Redesign Discussion Group, in Kolderie's words, was to "get the tops spinning," to compare notes, share ideas, and spin out the most creative and constructive ways to redesign government and the delivery of services – not necessarily to cut budgets, but as a means to improve outcomes and to solve problems.

Partly as a result of our networking and idea-sharing with the Redesign group, we've been better able to

plug in to other groups and bring our knowledge and insight to conversations on accountability and redesign. We were recently invited to present our work on *Governing with Accountability* and our *Smart Investments<sup>SM</sup> in Minnesota's Students* work to the bipartisan House Redesign Caucus.

At Growth & Justice, we know that most Minnesotans embrace the good that government does, and are glad to pay taxes to support these public investments – provided the funds are spent effectively and accountably.

Accountability in government, establishing goals and measures, and the need for continuous attention to the quality of our public investments remain important themes for us which are woven throughout all the other policy work we do. We hope and expect to engage in many more of these discussions in the coming months. 

# Thank You 2010 Donors

The work of Growth & Justice would not be possible without the support of a long list of individual and foundation supporters to whom we are extremely grateful.

*The following is a list of contributions received in 2010. Please contact us at [info@growthandjustice.org](mailto:info@growthandjustice.org) regarding any errors or omissions. Thank you for your generosity!*

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## Kudos and congratulations...

To **Arlen Erdahl**, Growth & Justice board member, who is one of the five recipients of the 2011 Hubert H. Humphrey Public Leadership Awards. This award honors individuals, organizations, or projects that have made significant contributions to the common good through public leadership and service;

To **Muna Anazodo**, recent Growth & Justice intern, on her new role as a higher education policy analyst with the Citizens League; and

To **Lauren Satterlee**, another former G&J intern, on her position at the Minnesota Environmental Initiative, where she's been working on their Energy Efficiency Solutions project.

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