

Minnesota Journal

Guidelines for Prospective Writers

How to submit an article

Interested writers are encouraged to contact *MN Journal* editor Trout Lowen at tlowen@citizensleague.org with answers to the following questions:

1. **What's the point?** Include a one or two sentence thesis statement.
2. **Why should readers care?** Include a one or two sentence argument for why this issue matters to our readers, or include a graphical element (chart, graph, or photograph) that illustrates the importance of your thesis.
3. **What should readers know after reading your article?** Highlight 3-4 ideas that the reader should take away from your piece.

Guidelines for submissions

1. **Policy analysis pieces** should substantially address at least one of the following:

- Identify and analyze a public policy challenge. What is the need in the community?
- Pose new solutions to public policy problems or evaluate existing public policy innovations. How does the piece identify potential solution strategies to address a need?
- Highlight examples of the Citizens League mission and principles in action, or a situation in which the Citizens League mission and principles could be applied. How does the piece document successful strategies?

Policy analysis pieces generally run approximately 1500 words; however, length is flexible. All should include a graphical element (e.g. chart, graph, picture, or illustration). They are not opinion or promotional pieces.

2. **Perspectives** and **profile pieces** are opinion pieces or personal stories. They should run approximately 800 words. Writers are encouraged to use their personal voice and style.

Perspectives are an opportunity to hear from Minnesotans about issues that affect them and their communities and to bring new voices into Minnesota's policy conversations.

Profiles highlight the stories and messages of Minnesotans who work for the common good. Profiles can use a narrative or a question-and-answer format.

Purpose of the *Minnesota Journal*

The *Minnesota Journal* supports the Citizens League workplan by:

- **Impacting public policy:** Communicating and advocating for the Citizens League's civic policy agenda and informing members on important policy issues;
- **Building a base of civic leaders:** Connecting members to each other and to the work of the Citizens League; and
- **Achieving organizational sustainability:** Building the members and the resources of the Citizens League.

Readership

Citizens League members and *Minnesota Journal* readers are engaged citizens, curious and informed about public policy and civic life. They have a range of backgrounds and levels of experience, including students, professionals, elected officials, and those with and without traditional policymaking experience. Some are active members of the Citizens League and other civic and community organizations; for others, reading the *Minnesota Journal* is their primary way of keeping in touch with public life.

Accuracy & Liability Policy

The author agrees to verify that: (a) the work is original and of your own creation; (b) where material is included from other sources, those sources are clearly cited; (c) the work is not protected or licensed by another publication or author; (d) the facts represented are true; (e) the work does not defame, libel or invade the privacy of any person or infringe any copyright.

Please visit our website to view past issues of the *Minnesota Journal*
(<http://www.citizensleague.org/publications/journal/>).

About the Citizens League:

Mission: *What is our fundamental identity?*

The Citizens League builds civic imagination and capacity in Minnesota by:

- Identifying, framing and proposing solutions to public policy problems;
- Developing civic leaders in all generations who govern for the common good; and
- Organizing the individual and institutional relationships necessary to achieve these goals.

The **purpose** of the Citizens League is to organize the *means* – the “civic infrastructure” – within the Citizens League and in Minnesota, to achieve these goals. “Civic infrastructure” refers to our fundamental governance and decision-making capacity.

Principles: *What are our values?*

1. We believe in the power and potential of all citizens. All Minnesotans are capable of developing an in-depth understanding of complicated public problems, of imagining innovative and effective policy solutions and ideas, and of governing for the common good.
2. We believe in democracy and good governance. Democracy requires that citizens have the interest in governing for the common good; the facts needed to make informed decisions; and the practical skills and “common ground” to analyze, debate, and solve public problems in light of shared democratic ideals and the long-term interest of Minnesota.
3. We believe in civic leadership and active citizenship. All Minnesotans have both the right and the responsibility to be active citizens and govern for the common good. This role of active citizen is integrated into all other individual roles; it cannot be delegated to experts or elected officials.
4. We believe in good politics and political competence. If democracy is “rule by the people,” then politics is the practice of democracy -- the means to solve public problems. Politics is what citizens do -- how they govern. Effective politics makes it possible to implement good public policy and to organize to achieve the common good, despite our very real differences.
5. We believe that individuals and institutions must sustain these ideals from one generation to the next. Minnesota’s public policy successes and our quality of life were made possible by individuals working within and across all types of institutions. These institutions and systems of policy-making are our civic legacy in Minnesota, and they must be re-made and re-imagined by each generation in order to maintain and sustain our quality of life and our ability to solve public problems.

Guidelines: *What set of civic guidelines and standards will we apply to all of our work?*

1. Defining a problem: People who are affected by a problem help to define the problem in keeping with our mission and principles. All Minnesotans have the capacity to help define policy issues. It is our goal to involve representatives from a broad range of groups and institutions that are affected by a policy question.
2. Demonstrating transparency and good governance: Leaders will establish a transparent governance process that expects all participants to engage in decision and policy making. All participants are expected to contribute to the discussion, to connect their self-interest with the common interest, to evaluate outcomes and to help set recommendations and next steps.
3. Contributing resources: All participants will help identify and contribute resources to address the problem or issue. All participants are expected to come as contributors to the process, bringing those resources they have at their disposal. These resources include the time, knowledge, in-kind support, relationships and money that they can leverage in the places where they spend time (work, family, congregations, boards, community, etc.).
4. Sustaining solutions: All participants will help advance and sustain recommended policy strategies. Participants in Citizens League work will not only contribute ideas and solution strategies, they will also help to advance and sustain these recommendations in the institutions where they spend their time (work, family, congregations, community, etc.) and have the authority and influence to act.