

Study Proposals Submitted in 2009

9.1 - Community Discussions

1. Describe your project idea, including clearly defining the problems and specific policy questions to be addressed.

I suggest an ongoing series of community discussions to identify what people want from government and what they are willing to pay for it. I seek "civil passion" vs. shout downs and inflammatory language. Strip away party language to expose the common beliefs on fundamental issues such as police, fire, utility, school etc. I see a moderator and 2-4 guests to lay a framework and hand the majority of time over to the participants. Speakers would agree to the goals of civil discourse, focus on common beliefs and strengthening the social fabric.

2. Why is this problem important?

The fabric of our society has been under stress for some 2 decades now and there is far too much time and focus, in the news and on the airwaves, on what divides us rather than the many more issues that unite us.

3. How could the Citizens League make a unique contribution?

This is by design a citizen-based, bottom up effort to bring about a more cohesive society.

4. What are prospects that project would yield recommendations that could be implemented and have a major impact on the problem?

I foresee a listing of all the areas that the participants agree, that could be make public, promoted, offered to candidates for response and amended over time.

5. Explain how this problem can be addressed by data, research, and reason? Identify probable sources for data and research.

Data would be the list above from the participants.

6. Explain how this proposal can be framed without partisan bias.

It is by design nonpartisan process with a cross-section of people by age, race, income, gender etc. Common beliefs would be sought that exist before party affiliation.

7. Why would this project be attractive to members?

I think this addresses the core value and purpose of the CL.

8. How would this project reach out to under-represented segments of the community?

Similar to the 90's Concord Coalition sponsored federal budget forums around the country, a broad-based group would be sought through community organizations such as churches, community groups such as ACORN, and others representing different faiths, races, and socioeconomic groups.

9. What is the potential for making this issue visible to a broader public? Why?

Very good. A public call could be made for participants with the right supporting partners and press coverage resulting in good exposure. Why, to further the goals listed above.

10. What resources -- funding, experts, etc. -- might be available to support this project?

I think the time is ripe for such an effort, despite the economy, with broad support from the business, sports, foundations and education groups that share this goal.

9.2 - Electoral reform

1. Describe your project idea, including clearly defining the problems and specific policy questions to be addressed.

Electoral reform: what measures might the State and local jurisdictions make in the electoral system that would increase turnout, lead to majority winners, encourage more positive campaigning, avoid recounts, etc

2. Why is this problem important?

At least 14 of the last 18 statewide elections have been won by less than a majority of the vote. Turnout in primaries is abysmally low. Negative campaigning is abysmally high. Etc

3. How could the Citizens League make a unique contribution?

A number of electoral reforms are being considered by various organizations and legislative committees: delayed runoff, instant runoff, earlier primaries, and changes in the caucus system, etc. Someone needs to evaluate all these ideas as a set and assess the interaction as well as the outcomes rather than approaching electoral reform piecemeal.

4. What are prospects that project would yield recommendations that could be implemented and have a major impact on the problem?

Very high.

5. Explain how this problem can be addressed by data, research, and reason? Identify probable sources for data and research.

Voting records, both here and in states/localities that use different methods than Minnesota, would be the first place to start I would think.

6. Explain how this proposal can be framed without partisan bias.

This is an issue that doesn't favor one political party over another.

7. Why would this project be attractive to members?

The Senate recount has put the electoral system front and center in members' minds.

8. How would this project reach out to under-represented segments of the community?

Some of the reform measures being debated could increase participation/election by under-represented segments. This fact should be helpful in establishing interest for participation in the project.

9. What is the potential for making this issue visible to a broader public? Why?

Very high, as the media is all over the story from many perspectives already.

10. What resources -- funding, experts, etc. -- might be available to support this project?

Lots of experts are available. I'd have to think more about funding sources.

9.3 - Energy

1. Describe your project idea, including clearly defining the problems and specific policy questions to be addressed.

The combination of \$4.00 gasoline, \$130 oil, and \$12 natural gas is crippling operating budgets, business plans, livelihoods, and lifestyles. Signs continue to point to worldwide energy supplies failing to meet demand. As the New York Times pointed out, "Across the nation, the realization is taking hold that rising energy prices are less a momentary blip than a change with lasting consequences." While we may look forward to a day when renewable energy takes the place of fossil fuels, we face disruptions and discomfort in the meantime. As Robert Hirsch said: There are only a few countries that could conceive of energy independence, the United States being one. But we really haven't started, and we can't even agree on what we really want and what's important. Sadly, that is one of the reasons why it is going to take a deepening recession and a great deal of personal hurt to get people to rethink their values and get motivated to do what's needed to pull us out of the problem. In his 2005 report to the Department of Energy, and in his testimony before the House Subcommittee on Energy and Air Quality, Hirsch said, "Previous energy transitions (wood to coal, coal to oil, etc.) were gradual and evolutionary; oil peaking will be abrupt and revolutionary. The world has never faced a problem like this." We are faced with a period of hard times like no other. This time, we are confronting real limits – struggling to adapt as we run short of vital resources and can no longer afford business as usual. What should our community's short-term strategy be? • Will we see bail-out plans for airlines, banks, and real estate? • How will school districts afford to fuel their school bus fleets? • How much more public funds should be devoted to energy assistance and food stamps? • How do we stimulate job creation? • As tax revenue declines, what else can be cut from public budgets? And how do we promote solutions in the long-term? • Will we need to examine the energy cost of everything we do? • Can we afford to rely on long-distance supply chains from distant resources to meet local needs? • How do we discover, select, and support the right mix of alternatives for our region? We have never faced a problem like this. We don't know what we want. We don't know what's important. We need to start some guided discussions to answer those questions. Peter Goodman, "Rethinking the country life as energy costs rise." New York Times, June 25, 2008. "Energy Future: A Significant Period of Discomfort." Interview with Robert Hirsch. Allianz Knowledge Newsletter, June 20, 2008. Testimony on Peak Oil. Dr. Robert L. Hirsch, Senior Energy Program Advisor, SAIC. Before the House Subcommittee on Energy and Air Quality. December 7, 2005. Robert Hirsch, "The Inevitable Peaking of World Oil Production." Atlantic Council of the United States Bulletin, Vol. XVI, No. 3. October 2005. Robert Hirsch, Roger Bezdek, & Robert Wendling. "Peaking of World Oil Production: Impacts, Mitigation, and Risk Management." NETL, February 2005.

2. Why is this problem important?

3. How could the Citizens League make a unique contribution?

Begin public discussion through focus groups, nominal group process, and guided discussion.

4. What are prospects that project would yield recommendations that could be implemented and have a major impact on the problem?

No Response

5. Explain how this problem can be addressed by data, research, and reason? Identify probable sources for data and research.

No Response

6. Explain how this proposal can be framed without partisan bias.

No Response

7. Why would this project be attractive to members?

It affects everyone.

8. How would this project reach out to under-represented segments of the community?

No Response

9. What is the potential for making this issue visible to a broader public? Why?

No Response

10. What resources -- funding, experts, etc. -- might be available to support this project?

Fresh Energy, Institute for Local Self-Reliance, Xcel Energy Foundation, McKnight - Energy Foundation

9.4 - Juvenile Justice Reform and Disproportionate Minority Contact

1. Describe your project idea, including clearly defining the problems and specific policy questions to be addressed.

Juvenile Justice Reform and Disproportionate Minority Contact

2. Why is this problem important?

“Studies indicate that minority youth receive tougher sentences and are more likely to be incarcerated than non-minority youth for the same offenses. With minority children making up one-third of the youth population but two-thirds of children in confinement.”

3. How could the Citizens League make a unique contribution?

By exposing the community to the challenges facing youth and offer community-based alternatives

4. What are prospects that project would yield recommendations that could be implemented and have a major impact on the problem?

Highly favorable- The assistance of Citizen League will aid in developing practical recommendations for juvenile justice reform

5. Explain how this problem can be addressed by data, research, and reason? Identify probable sources for data and research.

Data collection: related to how youth enter the juvenile justice system and key decision making points
Research: examine community-based alternatives that will aid citizens in MN to develop community centric programming

6. Explain how this proposal can be framed without partisan bias.

Addressing the needs of our future (our youth) is a non-partisan effort. At the federal level, the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act is currently up for reauthorization. Sen. Leahy of Vermont identifies juvenile justice and Reauthorization as a nonpartisan effort since it “ensures that the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention perform its important services free from politics and improper influence.”

7. Why would this project be attractive to members?

Impact on the entire community

8. How would this project reach out to under-represented segments of the community?

Focus is on addressing the racial disparities in the juvenile justice system

9. What is the potential for making this issue visible to a broader public? Why?

High potential since the future of juvenile justice system impacts the future of our nation

10. What resources -- funding, experts, etc. -- might be available to support this project?

May seek assistance of Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative and Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

9.5 - Re-examine the conclusions and recommendation of the League's study and report on future Minnesota energy needs and sources.

1. Describe your project idea, including clearly defining the problems and specific policy questions to be addressed.

To re-examine the conclusions and recommendation of the League's study and report on future Minnesota energy needs and sources.

2. Why is this problem important?

The study essentially threw out nuclear energy as a future energy source, I think primarily because of the bias of the Committee's chair. As a member of that committee, I should have expressed my reservation regarding this source. A failure I now regret. Although nuclear energy has its problems, essentially the failure of the US government to come up with a long term solution to the disposal of nuclear waste, nuclear energy probably is the one known source for generating non-green house gas electric energy. Is the league's position still valid? This should be re-examined.

3. How could the Citizens League make a unique contribution?

Review its previous position.

4. What are prospects that project would yield recommendations that could be implemented and have a major impact on the problem? Excellent

5. Explain how this problem can be addressed by data, research, and reason? Identify probable sources for data and research.

The League has the prior data and sources archived.

6. Explain how this proposal can be framed without partisan bias.

See the original motivation and charge.

7. Why would this project be attractive to members?

Non-polluting sources of energy, especially electric are still as necessary as at the time of the noted study.

8. How would this project reach out to under-represented segments of the community?

The costs of energy and electrical in particular are a significant part of low income families.

9. What is the potential for making this issue visible to a broader public? Why?

The League considered it significant before. It has not lost any significance since, in fact has become more so.

10. What resources -- funding, experts, etc. -- might be available to support this project?

See the previous study.

9.6 - Tools for Promoting Business Growth and Expansion

1. Describe your project idea, including clearly defining the problems and specific policy questions to be addressed.

What types of financial tools and technical assistance, if any, should state and local governments initiate and offer in order to promote business growth and expansion?

2. Why is this problem important?

For decades Minnesota has grown faster than the nation and enjoyed a diverse economy that has been resistant to downturns. But during this cycle the state has been affected more than the country as a whole, suggesting a new look at Minnesota's economic position and possible programs and incentives to encourage targeted startups and expansions. The state's success or lack thereof will strongly influence whether the state enjoys success in the next 50 years comparable to its impressive record in the last 50.

3. How could the Citizens League make a unique contribution?

The Citizens League is in a unique position to make recommendations without an obvious slant for or against the programs of the current administration.

4. What are prospects that project would yield recommendations that could be implemented and have a major impact on the problem?

I would think that the topic is important and timely, and recommendations based on objective analysis of successes elsewhere would gain attention from candidates for election in 2010.

5. Explain how this problem can be addressed by data, research, and reason? Identify probable sources for data and research.

I understand that programs offered by states fall into one of several categories. These programs could be researched directly and their effectiveness looked at through data available from the Dept. of Commerce or the Federal Reserve.

6. Explain how this proposal can be framed without partisan bias.

See above.

7. Why would this project be attractive to members?

The premise that the state is at a crossroads, coupled with the severe economic downturn, suggests the subject is timely and interest would be widespread.

8. How would this project reach out to under-represented segments of the community?

Aside from statewide, "one size fits all" programs, efforts could be targeted to look at enterprise zones or other programs devoted specifically to a geographic area of hardship. Residents and other persons interested in these issues could be attracted.

9. What is the potential for making this issue visible to a broader public? Why?

No Response

10. What resources -- funding, experts, etc. -- might be available to support this project?

Art Rolnick has spoken many times about state subsidies. Dan McElroy could offer several perspectives based on his broad experience. Mayors Rybak and Coleman could speak to core city needs and declining state support.

9.7 - Unallotment Authority

1. Describe your project idea, including clearly defining the problems and specific policy questions to be addressed.

Study of the authored by the governor

2. Why is this problem important?

This is probably the biggest issue with the state government right now, in terms of the use of the unallotment power. I think, as a nonpartisan policy think tank, the Citizens League is uniquely positioned to navigate this controversy and develop proposals for reform (if necessary), and hopefully get ahead of the battle that is all but guaranteed to be a major issue in the 2010 legislative session.

3. How could the Citizens League make a unique contribution?

Again, as a nonpartisan citizen-based watchdog, the Citizens League has a strong vested interest in the unallotment provision, and also a unique opportunity to facilitate a pragmatic, nonpartisan dialogue on this heated issue.

4. What are prospects that project would yield recommendations that could be implemented and have a major impact on the problem?

This is an issue that will undoubtedly be debated substantially by a number of organizations in the next session. Many of these organizations will be representing constituents that were adversely affected by the unallotment. The Citizens League does not inherently carry this bias, nor does it carry a partisan bias, and therefore has the opportunity to position itself as a source of unbiased objectivity on an issue that is going to bring a lot of bias and a lot of action in the next legislative session.

5. Explain how this problem can be addressed by data, research, and reason? Identify probable sources for data and research.

A number of states have unallotment provisions, and Minnesota has precedent with the issue, including court cases and 5 other examples of unallotment being implemented by governors of Minnesota.

6. Explain how this proposal can be framed without partisan bias.

Again, the unallotment issue has never really been a partisan issue. It has been used by both Democratic and Republican governors; The partisanship it has received lately has been largely a positioning battle between the legislature and the governor, and also a number of other groups that represent constituents who have been adversely impacted. All of these voices deserve a seat at the table, but they have also drowned out voices of objectivity on this issue, as well as the opinion of Minnesota's "average citizen" on what the unallotment statute should look like. There is also a lot of ambiguity in this statute that can be (and will) be addressed by experts. I believe it would be better to have these professionals address this issue in a Citizens League study committee as opposed to a courtroom.

7. Why would this project be attractive to members?

It's a good opportunity to facilitate a conversation on an important state policy issue as well as get the Citizens League name out there as a voice of pragmatism on contentious issues.

8. How would this project reach out to under-represented segments of the community?

It would give the opportunity for other voices to enter the conversation. The courts and the media have (and are likely to continue to) focus on potential plaintiffs and those impacted by the cuts themselves. But this does not substantially address the idea of unallotment as a policy/budgeting tool. More will have a voice in this debate if we do not just focus on the opinions of all of those with a conflict of interest.

9. What is the potential for making this issue visible to a broader public? Why?

Interest in the unallotment statute has piqued, probably more than ever before, both for noble reasons and for conflicted reasons. Most Minnesotans probably now know about unallotment, but few understand the intricacies of it, and many details of it don't even exist. This is an opportunity to bring more voices in to work out those details, and bring in more voices along the way. The result could be educational as well as facilitary.

10. What resources -- funding, experts, etc. -- might be available to support this project?

Minnesota-based organizations that are interested in promoting better budget practices or organizations interested in the transparency of budget processes.

9.8 - Robotic Transit

1. Describe your project idea, including clearly defining the problems and specific policy questions to be addressed.

Robotic transit. Can transit rebound from an obsolete product as baseball did from the dome? How much faster, and safer is the next generation of automated transit? Is 3 ft. of ROW easier to negotiate than 12 ft.?

2. Why is this problem important?

Driverless is now a majority for military planes, 50 years in development in heavy rail, and subway. A future trend in all aspects of transportation.

3. How could the Citizens League make a unique contribution?

Explain the new infrastructure. Sensor technology on peoples clothing, as well as the built environment. How portable devices, GPS, and transportation interact.

4. What are prospects that project would yield recommendations that could be implemented and have a major impact on the problem?

Future shock is lessened when people see it coming, and understand it.

5. Explain how this problem can be addressed by data, research, and reason? Identify probable sources for data and research.

Ford has done more research than GM. The NYC subway is upgrading over several decades. Rail is calling the upgrade "remote control". A light rail/monorail, with the necessary patents, is at skytraincorp.com. The military drone program is top secret.

6. Explain how this proposal can be framed without partisan bias.

Faster, safer, smaller subsidies, and in sync with all future transportation modes. Manual driving will be reckless endangerment in a driverless world.

7. Why would this project be attractive to members?

It's not a pipe dream. It will be reality before you know it.

8. How would this project reach out to under-represented segments of the community?

Transportation touches more lives than any other technology.

9. What is the potential for making this issue visible to a broader public? Why?

A plan that incorporates the next generation of transportation will avoid the mistakes made in the past/present.

10. What resources -- funding, experts, etc. -- might be available to support this project?

Experts on driverless transportation might be easier to find than anyone with funding sources.

9.9 - Common Understanding of "Home"

1. Describe your project idea, including clearly defining the problems and specific policy questions to be addressed.

To get a common understanding of "home". To convene people from different cultures, and economic positions. To bring together in the same room people who are homeless, people who work in social service agencies, elected officials, low-income recipients of social services, funders of housing programs etc. To bring these people together, each as experts from their own position, and have targeted discussions to come to a common understanding of "home". The Public Policy Project and Citizens League organized a series of conversations around healthcare. One aspect of those conversations that I found to be vitally important was people from a variety of backgrounds listening to each other. Sharing very personal and different cultural and economic positions on health and healthcare. People from different positions saw that it was not a question of pointing fingers of blame but really hearing a valid point of view and from that broader understanding a consensual policy change could be developed.

2. Why is this problem important?

The current "housing crisis". People are homeless or without decent housing, other people are afraid of losing their homes and foreclosures continue. Current economic climate combined with an atmosphere of fear fostering blame and distrust. That is keeping people from working together to make any significant progress. To build sustainable communities we need to work from a common understanding. Recognizing each of our self interest and building on the investment we each have. Common understanding of "home" where everyone is invested in that community. Now, for example, someone works as housing poverty provider, and is overwhelmed by repeat "offenders" who once again need assistance. Beat down "client" says the place was inhabitable and so he could not pay the rent and they remain on different sides of a process that needs to be designed to work with a single sided goal.

3. How could the Citizens League make a unique contribution?

The citizens league could provide a group of civic minded financially secure participants and provide financial support.

4. What are prospects that project would yield recommendations that could be implemented and have a major impact on the problem?

Recommended policy changes developed from these convening would be strongly supported because of diverse group of people that were brought together and common understandings that were built.

5. Explain how this problem can be addressed by data, research, and reason? Identify probable sources for data and research.

Recycling of same old programs that have not improved problem.

6. Explain how this proposal can be framed without partisan bias.

It is not about blame it is about common solutions where individuals all contribute.

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9.10 - Chartered Schools Policy Review Group

1. Describe your project idea, including clearly defining the problems and specific policy questions to be addressed.

After reviewing the previous work of the Citizens League on Chartered Schools, the Policy Review Group recommended the Citizens League:

1. Convene a full study committee to comprehensively re-imagine what learning should look like in Minnesota. This effort should include an in-depth study of chartered schools, but should not focus on chartered schools exclusively. Public district schools and alternative education structures including private schools and homeschooling need to be acknowledged as part of the learning picture.
2. Highlight the public and to policy makers chartered-school and district school initiatives that show success. The Citizens League should seek out successful examples of learning innovation, document best practices, and further examine the policies and practices that favor uniformity at the expense of innovation.
3. Analyze underlying governance structures—for example, the legacy of school districts—and questioning whether historical rationales justify present governance structures.
4. Think and learn about ways that we can better measure success and quality in education.
5. Acknowledge the constitutional and other legal constraints that, due to present and upcoming pension obligations for retired teachers and administrators, are curtailing opportunities for innovation.
6. Recognize that novel legal and organizational mechanisms for creating learning environments (chartered schools being one) represent the “supply side” approach to education; meanwhile, on the “demand side,” societal trends in Minnesota seem to be moving faster than our responses to children’s educational and training needs. For example, test scores, preparation for post-secondary schooling and training, and drop-out rates, remain an intensifying challenge. We also need to look beyond Minnesota to economic challenges from Europe and emerging nations as well as world-wide competition for educated talent.

2. Why is this problem important?

Chartered Schools continue to be an innovative and valuable component of the educational system in Minnesota. The Citizens League has not revisited this topic since 1988.

3. How could the Citizens League make a unique contribution?

Instrumental in created the Chartered School Option, Citizens League is in a unique position to address the original intent of the program and its future in Minnesota.

4. What are prospects that the project would yield recommendations that could be implemented and have a major impact on the problem?

Highly likely, as one of the original driving forces behind the option, the Citizens League is able to illustrate the innovative solution that Chartered Schools offer.

5. Explain how this problem can be addressed by data, research, and reason? Identify probable sources for data and research.

Previous Citizens League work, OLA reports, a number of state and national reports on the Chartered School Movement.

6. Explain how this proposal can be framed without partisan bias.

The Chartered School movement was founded on a non-partisan basis by the Citizens League in the 1980s, partisanship has not entered the picture as of yet.

7. Why would this project be attractive to members?

It's something the Citizens League is already well known for. Members are still interested in the topic and enough time has passed to review the previous work.

8. How would this project reach out to under-represented segments of the community?

Chartered Schools have been developed to assist all levels of society.

9. What is the potential for making this issue visible to a broader public? Why?

The topic is already in the news locally and nationally and will continue to be so as education funding shrinks.

10. What resources -- funding, experts, etc. -- might be available to support this project?

There are a number of experts the Citizens League is already associated with due to it previous work. Funding could come from a number of sources starting by reviewing our original funders.

9.11 - Aging Services Policy Review Group

1. Describe your project idea, including clearly defining the problems and specific policy questions to be addressed.

The Aging Services Policy Review Group reviewed the past work of the Citizens League and recommended:

1. The Citizens League could study policies adopted around the nation and in Minnesota to help guide the creation and regulation of what will likely be a burgeoning market for financial planning. This would include looking at what consumer protections need to be in place.
2. The Citizens League could examine the delivery and financing of aging services in Minnesota pertaining to cost and quality in the health care system. This issue continues to be a major part of the policy debate. Past Citizen's League studies provide a good background to inform future focus.
3. The Citizens League could take an overall look at healthcare and aging services that still need to be met in the 21st century. Relevant issues that will likely need further study include consumer choice, measuring outcomes, and cost containment. Further, the Citizens League should work to prioritize the competing needs in aging services.

2. Why is this problem important?

Life expectancy has doubled in the last century. Older adults are living longer, and are more active and healthy than ever before. The definition of what it means to be "old" has changed drastically and now includes three generations of "old."

3. How could the Citizens League make a unique contribution?

Historically, Citizens League policy reports heavily related to aging services that met the needs of frail elderly, focusing on healthcare and institution-based living. The scope of today's policy has expanded to build on the assets of older adults, responding to their desires for self-determination and independent living. The focus is on deinstitutionalization and "aging in place" in community, with the development of home and community based services to help older adults remain active.

4. What are prospects that the project would yield recommendations that could be implemented and have a major impact on the problem?

The population is aging. There are a number of factors for this demographic shift including the increased life expectancy, lower birth rate, and aging of the baby boom generation. Understanding these factors and their economic impact to society is critical in the development of aging services policy.

5. Explain how this problem can be addressed by data, research, and reason? Identify probable sources for data and research.

There are many governmental, non-profit, and corporate stakeholders currently work to raise awareness of an aging society, garner consensus on issues, and develop policy related to aging services and older adults, these can all be sources in data and research.

6. Explain how this proposal can be framed without partisan bias.

Aging services spans partisan lines.

7. Why would this project be attractive to members?

The Citizens League has done extensive work in the past but not recently. The issue is gaining importance as baby boomers enter retirement and “old age”.

8. How would this project reach out to under-represented segments of the community?

The majority of support and care for older adults is provided informally by otherwise unpaid family and friend caregivers. The social and financial impact of this care cannot be overstated.

9. What is the potential for making this issue visible to a broader public? Why?

Tremendous, the issue will only grow in importance in the coming years.

10. What resources -- funding, experts, etc. -- might be available to support this project?

Varied, health and human services funding, there are a number of funders for elder services. The experts abound, for example William Mitchell College of Law has a nationally recognized center on elder law and justice.