

# Footnotes...

FIRST QUARTER 2010

## Milwaukee County government report generates big crowds and lots of interest

The Forum's release of its long-awaited report on Milwaukee County's government structure – entitled *Should it Stay or Should it Go?* – drew nearly 250 individuals to a breakfast event at the Downtown Milwaukee Hilton on January 27.

Forum President Rob Henken presented the report, stating that significant restructuring of Milwaukee County government should be on the table, but warning that any structural reform will be extremely complicated and must be led by state officials.

“Big structural changes to Milwaukee County government will require strong leadership from state government and a willingness by the state to devote considerable human resources and an up-front financial investment,” said Henken. “State elected officials not only would have to be in on the discussion, but they would have to lead it.”

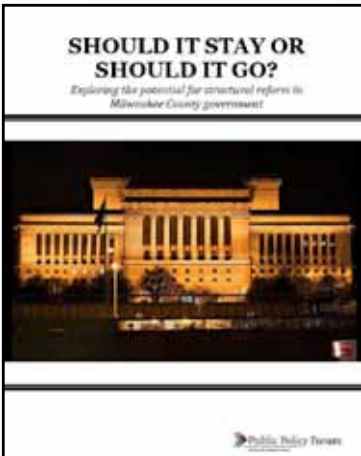
The 160-page report, commissioned by the Greater Milwaukee Committee (GMC), includes in-depth analyses of the major functions of county government, as well as analysis of the county's fringe benefits structure, presentation of three different restructuring models, examination of Massachusetts' successful elimination of several of its county governments, and discussion of “certain key decisions that

require immediate consideration regardless of whether and what types of governance changes are pursued.”

Reaction to the report was widespread, including editorials in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* and *The Business Journal Serving Greater Milwaukee*, and detailed coverage on WTMJ-TV and WUWM radio. In addition, the Forum's Web site generated almost 1,350 visits on the day of the release, which is nearly double the traffic on a typical day.

The report also has been a sought-after topic among area business, government and civic groups, generating a half-dozen presentations since its release and a one-hour public affairs television show produced by “Fourth Street Forum.”

The entire report can be accessed at the Forum's Web site at [www.publicpolicyforum.org/milwaukeecountyreport.php](http://www.publicpolicyforum.org/milwaukeecountyreport.php).



### MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

As discussed above, the release of our report on Milwaukee County government restructuring was a big deal for the Forum. It was big in terms of the number and prominence of the people who attended our breakfast event, as well as in the breadth and depth of the media's coverage. Perhaps even more important, it was big because this report clearly has found its way into the civic consciousness and is generating renewed (and hopefully better informed) conversation about the future of Milwaukee County government.

But from the Forum's perspective, is that enough? Is it sufficient to produce 160 pages of objective research on a key policy issue, or should the Forum be taking a stand? Should we be actively demanding action from policymakers or simply doing our best to share our research with them? What about the gubernatorial candidates – should we be challenging them to take positions on our policy options?

Those are always tough questions for the Forum, which has clung fiercely to its reputation for objectivity and nonpartisanship for 97 years, but which doesn't want its research to sit on a shelf. And they're particularly tough when we've produced a research product that has received widespread acclaim and that speaks to a set of issues that has lingered for far too long.

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### Footnotes (published quarterly)

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**MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT, continued**

The Forum's Executive Committee soon will embark on a new strategic planning process, and revisiting these questions from a general perspective will be a central element. In the meantime, in regard to Milwaukee County, we'll be calling our Research Committee together to discuss potential follow-up research, and we'll continue to disseminate the facts we've uncovered through our blog, public presentations, Viewpoints, and my participation on the county's Long Range Strategic Plan Steering Committee. Should you have any thoughts or suggestions, please send me an e-mail or give me a call.



At the Forum's annual meeting, Roger Schroeder (center), longtime Forum treasurer, was thanked for his 15 years of service by Jim Barry III (left), current chairman, and Rick White, former chairman. Replacing Schroeder as treasurer is Bradley Viegut, director of public finance at Robert W. Baird & Company.

Annual meeting

**Move to knowledge-based economy called a "work in progress"**

The Milwaukee area's transition to a knowledge-based economy probably is best described as a "work in progress," according to the Forum's newest endeavor, the Metro Milwaukee Innovation Index.

The Index, which was unveiled at the Forum's mid-March annual meeting, shows that several ingredients for innovation are on a positive trend in the region, including university research and development spending, educational attainment, and jobs created by small business. Less promising are patent activity, the number of scientists and engineers, and the growth of knowledge workers per capita.

The Milwaukee region was compared with the metro areas of Austin; Kansas City; Portland, Oregon; Cincinnati; Indianapolis; and Minneapolis. The only category in which the region rates "favorable" to the benchmark areas is in the number of skilled workers/technicians. It rates "average" in university research & development, entrepreneurial jobs, scientists & engineers, knowledge workers, skilled immigrant population, and prosperity. It rates "unfavorable" in industry patents, business dynamics (creation of new firms), educational attainment, capital formation, and exports.



Researcher Laura Million summarizes the Forum's new Innovation Index report

Following review of the Index findings by Forum President Rob Henken and Researcher Laura Million, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Chancellor Carlos Santiago spoke about the university's effort to focus more on research.

While the Index identified almost \$212 million in total university R&D expenditures in the Milwaukee area, Santiago said the University of Illinois-Chicago alone expends more than \$330 million in R&D; the University of Wisconsin-Madison, \$800 million; the Minneapolis area, \$600 million; and the Austin area, \$500 million.

Santiago noted that since he arrived at UWM in 2004, the university's R&D expenditures have grown from \$20 million to \$54 million last year, and they are expected to reach \$68 million this year. He also talked about UWM's need to expand beyond its east side location and its push for schools of public health, freshwater sciences, and engineering.

The Metro Milwaukee Innovation Index will be compiled periodically by the Forum. This first one can be accessed at [www.publicpolicyforum.org/pdfs/InnovationIndex.pdf](http://www.publicpolicyforum.org/pdfs/InnovationIndex.pdf).



UWM Chancellor Carlos Santiago (left) builds a case for more research in the Milwaukee area.

## Preventing fraud by focusing on quality child care

Culminating the Forum's three-year series of research reports on high-quality early childhood care and education, Forum Research Director Anneliese Dickman and Researcher Melissa Kovach presented their cost-benefit analysis of high-quality child care at a February Viewpoint luncheon.

Dickman and Kovach provided estimates of the cost of various policy options for improving child-care quality, but emphasized that only the highest quality has the potential to maximize long-term economic benefits to the region.

Following their presentation, Reggie Bicha, secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, spoke about proposed new regulations for child-care providers, including a Quality Ratings and Improvement System that would tie the amount of taxpayer-funded subsidy to quality for the first time.

Forum President Rob Henken also announced a second phase of early childhood education research – a two-year project analyzing the impact of welfare reform policies on the child-care market. The project is designed, in part, to inform state deliberations on improving child-care policies. This phase of research has funding commitments from the



*Wisconsin Secretary of Children and Families Reggie Bicha (top) discusses the state's new child care quality initiatives following a briefing by Forum Researcher Melissa Kovach on the costs and benefits of various levels of child care.*

Richard and Ethel Herzfeld Foundation, the Charles D. Jacobus Family Foundation, and the Greater Milwaukee Foundation.

The initial three-year project was funded by the Brico Fund, the Buffett Early Childhood Fund, the Greater Milwaukee Foundation, the Richard and Ethel Herzfeld Foundation, the Joyce Foundation, the Faye McBeath Foundation, Rockwell Automation, and the Weiss Family Foundation.

Viewpoint sponsored by:



### Welcome new members

(as of January 1, 2010)

American Transmission Company  
Riley Construction Company  
Village of Greendale  
Village of Shorewood

### Forum membership has spoken

The results are in on the Forum's new membership survey. Surveys were filled out by 118 members and revealed the following:

- 60% said they are members because the Forum serves a critical community purpose
- 42% said 'members receiving research first' would add value to membership
- 77% said current membership benefits represent a good value
- 88% said they would likely or very likely recommend membership to others
- 98% said they prefer communications electronically
- 87% said they have visited the Forum's Web site
- 92% agree or strongly agree that the Forum is doing a good job of disseminating research through the media
- 95% said the Forum is researching topics of importance to the community.

Regular surveys are used by the Forum to assess members' satisfaction. This survey also is specifically tied to the executive committee's deliberations on a new strategic membership/development plan to be unveiled later this year.

### Survey shows support for economic focus on water

The latest *The People Speak Poll* shows support from Greater Milwaukee residents for using the region's freshwater resource to spur economic development, even if it means paying more for their own water or using public subsidies.

Nearly 70% of municipal water users surveyed would be willing to pay a small surcharge "to fund economic development activities promoting southeast Wisconsin as a place for water-related research and economic growth." In addition, 65% of respondents agree that government subsidies are "desirable to attract new or expanded water industries," and more than 80% of respondents agree the region has the potential to become a global leader in water technology.

The poll of 429 residents in Milwaukee, Waukesha, Washington and Ozaukee counties was conducted in mid-February. A *Research Brief* analyzing the poll results can be accessed at <http://epic.cuir.uwm.edu/peoplespeakpoll/>.

*The People Speak Poll* is a collaboration between the Forum, UWM's Center for Urban Initiatives and Research, and *The Business Journal Serving Greater Milwaukee*.

## New regulations curb choice school growth

The Forum's 12th edition of the annual census of the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP) found that fewer schools joined the choice program between 2008-09 and 2009-10 than ever before. In addition, 14 MPCP schools closed and three others merged. Nevertheless, the number of full-time students using vouchers is greater than in any other year of the program's 19-year history.

The *Research Brief* attributes the fewer new schools and closures to new state regulations requiring new schools to obtain pre-accreditation before opening and existing schools to become accredited within three years of joining the program.

Under the pre-accreditation requirement, 19 schools applied, but just three were approved. Another 38 schools had indicated to state regulators an intent to participate, but did not apply for pre-accreditation.

The pre-accreditation process is conducted by the Institute for the Transformation of Learning at Marquette University.

The *Brief* can be accessed at [www.publicpolicyforum.org/pdfs/2010VoucherBrief.pdf](http://www.publicpolicyforum.org/pdfs/2010VoucherBrief.pdf). In addition to the *Brief*, the Forum has published its annual MPCP directory of schools providing contact and other factual data about the 112 choice schools. This year, the directory is available only online at [www.publicpolicyforum.org/voucherposter.htm](http://www.publicpolicyforum.org/voucherposter.htm).

## New trustees elected to board



William R.A. Bergum  
*Badger Meter, Inc.*



Dr. Michael L. Burke  
*Milwaukee Area Technical College*



Kathryn A. Kuhn  
*Medical College of Wisconsin*



Keith Lester  
*Rockwell Automation*



Paula H. Penebaker  
*YWCA*



Randall Satterfield  
*American Transmission Company*



Susan M. Smith  
*Alverno College*

Not pictured:  
Matthew J. Parlow,  
*Marquette University Law School*  
Mark Sherry, *Mortenson Construction*

## Salute award nominations now being accepted

Nominations for this year's *Salute to Local Government* awards are now being accepted. Nominating is simple and can be done online at <http://publicpolicyforum.org/salutenomination.php>. There are six categories, including the *Norman N. Gill* and *Leader of the Future* awards. The deadline is Friday, May 7; the awards breakfast will be held Thursday, June 17.