2008 Annual Report

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**From the chairman**

Last year was highlighted by a record number of research reports and a return to the Forum’s roots as expressed in its founding mission statement in 1913: “…to promote the adoption of scientific methods of managing and supervising municipal affairs…to cooperate with and facilitate the work of public officials…to collect, classify and publicize facts as to the administration of municipal governments and schools.”

When Rob Henken was hired a little more than a year ago as the Forum’s president, he told our board of trustees he wanted to tie more of our research to specific problems immediately before policymakers and the community. During Rob’s first full year as president, the organization has made that shift, and its reputation of providing useful and productive guidance has been solidified and enhanced. On such issues as transit, workforce development, parks and culture, the justice system, and city of Milwaukee and Milwaukee County finances, the Forum has produced in-depth analysis and possible courses of action to remediate financial or structural problems.

All of this, of course, bodes well for keeping the Forum a vital and vibrant organization to which policymakers throughout southeastern Wisconsin can turn for nonpartisan research. That doesn’t mean, however, there aren’t challenges. The most significant are the retention and addition of members, and the acquisition of funds for research. With a struggling economy, companies and organizations are assessing their involvement in the community beyond what is strictly needed to be a viable and profitable business.

That’s why the Forum’s aggressive research and event agenda, and its willingness to try new things, such as member-only events and partnerships with organizations that have similar policy interests, are so important. The Forum must maintain its relevancy in a time when every public and private expenditure is under intense scrutiny. Rob not only has an inclination for such innovation, but he has shown he can do it successfully.

After three years as chairman, I am stepping down…but not out of the organization. I want to thank Forum members and staff during the three years of my tenure, and presidents Jeff Browne and Rob Henken, for their steadfast support and work in making the Forum one of the premier non-partisan policy research organizations in the country.

Jim Barry III, a well-known and respected Milwaukee businessman, will become chairman of an organization that is on a steady rise in productivity, integrity, and leadership. Jim’s involvement in civic affairs is significant. Besides being a Forum vice chairman for the last several years, he is past president of the Rotary Club of Milwaukee and of the Milwaukee River Revitalization Foundation, as well as past chairman of the Greater Milwaukee Chapter of the American Red Cross.

Professionally, as president of Colliers Barry, Jim is intimately involved in the economic development of the region, having brokered hundreds of industrial, office, and investment transactions, and winning recognition from industry peers for his work.

I look forward to continuing my participation in the Forum as Jim guides it to even greater heights.

Cordially,

F. William Haberman
Attorney, Michael Best & Friedrich LLP

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**Vision...**

Our hope is for a southeastern Wisconsin that is socially and economically healthy and that deals decisively, responsibly, and in a timely manner with public issues. We will be the indispensable resource for objective research and analysis to guide and shape public policy.

**Mission...**

We seek, discover, and disclose true and accurate information to enhance the effectiveness of government and public policy in southeastern Wisconsin, and we advocate for its use in the making of public policy.
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Tax Increment Financing in Southeastern Wisconsin
Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is southeastern Wisconsin's largest economic development tool. With 176 TIF districts and $8.4 billion in property value, the collective tax base devoted to TIF districts in our region ranks behind only the city of Milwaukee among the region's largest tax bases. This Research Brief analyzes why TIF is used less in southeastern Wisconsin than the rest of the state and what it means to future growth.

EDUCATION/EARLY CHILDHOOD

Milwaukee voucher schools 2008-2009
Directory of schools participating in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program.

Did compromise voucher law achieve intended purpose?
In early 2006, Governor Doyle signed Act 125, codifying the legislative compromise that allowed the cap on enrollment in Milwaukee's Parental Choice Program to be increased in exchange for greater accountability for the participating schools. This Research Brief reviews implementation of accountability measures by Milwaukee's choice schools.

Parents pleased with child care options and quality
A survey of 430 parents in southeastern Wisconsin finds the majority are satisfied with the quality of their child care arrangements and their options for child care. A Research Brief discussing the survey results notes the contradiction between them and other research on child care quality in the region, which has found that the majority of providers are of mediocre quality.

Also discusses how proximity to northern Illinois may be a key factor in fueling strong growth.

Wisconsin's Workforce Development System
A resource map of Wisconsin's workforce development system graphically depicts state and federal funding devoted to employment and training programs administered by the state. The accompanying Research Report warns of over-reliance on federal funds and suggests the need for restructuring and reform of the state's workforce programming and funding.

Toward High Quality Early Childhood Education: An Imperative for the Regional Economy
The general consensus among researchers is that high quality early childhood programs result in better school readiness and better long-term outcomes, including higher wages, lower crime, and healthier families. This Research Paper explains how a new approach may be needed that defines early childhood care as an economic development tool.

Child Care Provider Survey Reveals Cost Constraints Quality
A survey of 414 child care providers in southeastern Wisconsin reveals that cost as well as low wages and lack of benefits for workers can constrain providers from pursuing improvements to child care quality. This Research Brief explains how lack of capacity to pursue quality improvements is relevant to the debate in Wisconsin regarding parent subsidies for child care.

2007-2008 southeastern Wisconsin school district rankings
Pull-out poster providing rankings of K-12 school districts, according to enrollment, district finances, student participation, and student performance measures.

Region's schools narrow achievement gap with state
In a reversal from last year, the 2007-2008 achievement gap between schools in southeastern Wisconsin and those in the rest of the state, as measured by Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Exam standardized test scores, narrowed in all subjects at all grade levels. This Research Brief discusses key findings from the annual analysis of public schools data in southeastern Wisconsin.

GOVERNMENT FINANCE/STRUCTURE

A capital and debt management tale of two local governments
Infrastructure – in the case of roads and sewers – underlies the growth and development of cities and regions. This “Election Issues” report discusses and critiques the capital and debt management policies pursued by Milwaukee County and the city of Milwaukee.
Citizen Views on Government Structure in Milwaukee County

In the wake of calls for the possible elimination of Milwaukee County government, a survey of 380 county residents reveals they have a favorable view of services provided by county government, but a majority sees a need for some government restructuring. This Research Report also shows African-American and low-income respondents are less positive about county government.

Budget Brief: Milwaukee County 2009 Executive Budget

As in the past several years, Milwaukee County faced a difficult budget in 2009. The Budget Brief points out that what is different in the county executive’s recommended budget is a clear emphasis on privatization as the primary strategy for addressing the county’s structural shortfall.

Budget Brief: 2009 City of Milwaukee Proposed Budget

In introducing his 2009 budget, Mayor Tom Barrett called it “the toughest we have faced.” The Budget Brief describes why the mayor was not exaggerating, citing not only typical challenges such as increased wage and benefits costs and stagnant state aids, but also impacts generated by national economic conditions. The Brief commends the city for establishing a strategic framework for addressing long-term challenges, but notes that actual solutions have yet to be identified.

Milwaukee County Funded Parks and Cultural Institutions: A fiscal assessment 2000-2008 and beyond

This Research Report describes how and why publicly-funded parks and cultural assets in Milwaukee County face significant long-term fiscal challenges and have experienced varying degrees of success in developing strategic plans and securing capital resources to address those challenges.

GENERAL POLICY RESEARCH

Corporate Views on Climate Change: A Survey of Wisconsin Business Executives

A survey of 340 business executives finds the state’s business community skeptical about climate change but generally receptive to many proposed solutions. This Research Report explains that while executives rank climate change a low priority issue, a majority support policies to promote energy efficiency, renewable energy, and nuclear power.

12th Annual Report Card on Charitable Giving in Milwaukee County

The Report Card tracks gifts made by individuals, businesses, and foundations to local bellwether organizations, giving a yearly snapshot of the support for local nonprofits. The 2008 Report Card finds a general decline in contributions and increased pessimism about increased giving in the future.
With more than 35 public speaking appearances; more than 100 media hits, including newspaper/radio/TV stories, op-eds, podcasts, etc.; and more than 80 blog posts in 2008, Forum researchers have been aggressive in making sure the results of their research receive as much attention as possible throughout the region…and the country.

January
Anneliese Dickman
- Wisconsin School Readiness Philanthropy Group – Milwaukee

February
Rob Henken
- Intergovernmental Coordinating Council – Milwaukee
- Heartland Alliance Investors Retreat – Milwaukee
Ryan Horton
- Great Lakes Urban Exchange – Buffalo

March
Rob Henken
- Fourth Street Forum – Milwaukee

April
Rob Henken
- Historic Milwaukee, Inc. – Milwaukee
Anneliese Dickman
- Economic Summit – Madison
Melissa Kovach
- Summit on Economic Justice for Women – Atlanta

May
Rob Henken
- Milwaukee County Board Transportation, Public Works and Transit Committee
- Alliance for Downtown Parking and Transportation – Milwaukee
- Southeast Wisconsin Regional Transit Authority – Oak Creek
- Milwaukee Common Council Public Works Committee

June
Rob Henken
- Johnson Foundation Wingspread – Racine
- Sunrise Rotary Club – Milwaukee
- Intergovernmental Coordinating Council – South Milwaukee
- North Shore Rotary – Bayside
- Urban Economic Development Association Annual Community Development Summit – Milwaukee

July
Ryan Horton
- Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Development Board – Wisconsin Rapids

August
Ryan Horton
- Governmental Research Association’s annual conference – Boston

September
Rob Henken
- Urban Economic Development Association – Milwaukee
- Fuel Milwaukee
Anneliese Dickman
- Greater Milwaukee Literacy Coalition
Ryan Horton
- Public Policy Forum Workforce Development Viewpoint – Milwaukee

October
Rob Henken
- Make it Work Milwaukee – West Allis
- Rotary Club of Milwaukee
- Kiwanis Club of Milwaukee
- Johnson Foundation Wingspread – Racine
Ryan Horton
- University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee School of Architecture and Urban Planning

November
Rob Henken
- Fourth Street Forum – Milwaukee
Ryan Horton
- Milwaukee Area Workforce Funding Alliance

December
Rob Henken/Anneliese Dickman/Anneliese Dickman
- Greater Milwaukee Foundation

November
Rob Henken
- Executive Committee of the Governor’s Council of Workforce Investment – DeForest
- North Central Wisconsin Workforce Development Board – Wisconsin Rapids
Ryan Horton
- University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee School of Architecture and Urban Planning

December
Rob Henken
- Make it Work Milwaukee – West Allis
- Rotary Club of Milwaukee
- Kiwanis Club of Milwaukee
- Johnson Foundation Wingspread – Racine
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December
Rob Henken/Anneliese Dickman/Anneliese Dickman
- Greater Milwaukee Foundation
MAY 8
Taking off on economic development
Panel discussion on the future of Milwaukee County's Mitchell International Airport: Barry Bateman, director, Mitchell International Airport; Scott Dickson, chief marketing officer, Midwest Airlines; and Ryan McCue, mayor, city of Cudahy.

JULY 23
Here today, gone tomorrow?
Panel discussion on the future of Milwaukee County government: Richard Cox, former superintendent, Milwaukee House of Correction; Dan Finley, former Waukesha County Executive; Ralph Holmmon, former director, Milwaukee County Human Services; Chas. Mulcahy, former supervisor, Milwaukee County Board; Linda Seemeyer, former director, Milwaukee County Administrative Services; Michael Skwierawski, former chief judge, Milwaukee County. Moderated by Mike Gousha, of Marquette University and WISN-TV.

SEPTEMBER 29
Untangling Wisconsin's workforce development programs and funding
Panel discussion on Wisconsin's workforce development programs and initiatives: Ryan Horton, senior researcher, Public Policy Forum; Roberta Gassman, secretary, Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development; Phil Neuenfeldt, secretary/treasurer, Wisconsin State AFL-CIO; and Tim Sullivan, CEO, Bucyrus International. Moderated by Dan Bader, chairman, Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board.

DECEMBER 4
The Long and Winding Road
Panel discussion on recommendations of the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Transit Authority (RTA) and their importance to business: Karl Ostby, RTA chairman; Tim Sheehy, president, Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce; Todd Battle, president, Kenosha Area Business Alliance; and Roger Caron, president, Racine Area Manufacturers and Commerce. Moderated by Bruce Murphy, editor, Milwaukee Magazine.
EXCELLENCE IN PROBLEM SOLVING
City of Milw. - Dept. of City Development
The city of Milwaukee has reduced the overall permit processing time with the creation of the ePermit program. The new system is an online permit application process allowing contractors to apply and pay online for permits that do not require a plan review.

EFFECTIVE USE OF TECHNOLOGY
Milwaukee County Treasurer’s Office
A number of changes in the treasurer’s office resulted in improved quality of service and reduced operational costs. A one-stop real estate records center for the public was created by consolidating tax records with the register of deeds. In addition, the public now has access to on-line property tax records and an on-line electronic payment option.

MANAGING FOR RESULTS
Hamilton School District
The district implemented a plan to improve academic achievement, address the issue of aging facilities, and increase community satisfaction. The plan included research-based instruction and assessment practices, collection and utilization of data in decision-making, promotion of community engagement, and prioritization of financial resources.

INTER-GOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION
Walworth County board of supervisors & the county’s school districts
Walworth County and its 15 school districts have made special needs education a priority. More than $17 million was spent to construct the Lakeland School in Elkhorn to provide special needs children throughout the county with first-rate educational opportunities.

PUBLIC-PRIVATE COOPERATION
Milwaukee Center for Independence and Milwaukee Public Schools
The FUEL4U Breakfast Packaging Program is the result of collaboration between the Milwaukee Center for Independence and Milwaukee Public Schools. It provides students with a nutritious meal to help them maintain positive attitudes, improve attention, and reduce absenteeism.

GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY/ETHICS
School District of Elmbrook
Following the defeat of a school construction/renovation referendum in 2007, the district worked with a team of “no” and “yes” voters to craft a revised plan based on more realistic specifications and greater openness regarding the needs of the district. Significant transparency efforts were initiated, including a citizen analysis process, publicizing meetings on government access cable television, and open dialogue between the citizen team and meeting attendees. In 2008, the revised plan was passed.

Leader of the Future Award
Steven J. Schaer, city planner, City of West Allis

Norman N. Gill Award
Barry Bateman, director, General Mitchell International Airport, Milwaukee County

James R. Ryan Lifetime Achievement Award
James R. Ryan (posthumously)

Thanks to our Salute sponsors:

Robert E. Henken, M.J.P.A. president
Anneliese M. Dickman, J.D. research director
Jeffrey K. Schmidt researcher
Melissa Kovach, M.P.P. researcher
Vanessa Allen, M.P.A. researcher
Catherine A. Crother office manager

Not pictured:
John Kovari, Norman N. Gill fellow
Forum timeline...

1913  Milwaukee Citizens’ Bureau of Municipal Efficiency established with 39 members to "promote the adoption of scientific methods of managing and supervising municipal affairs...to cooperate with and facilitate the work of public officials...to collect, classify and analyze, correlate, interpret and publicize facts as to the administration of municipal governments and schools."

1918  County government becomes new focus of Bureau study; Bureau develops issue agenda to counter what was believed to be an "attempt by the state to put a disproportional share of maintaining state government upon the cities."

1921  Organization becomes Citizens’ Bureau of Milwaukee; staff tired of being called "the efficiency boys."

1933  Bureau seeks ways to cut government expenditures as unemployment/relief costs soar; criticizes Milwaukee County for funding local relief through politically expedient, but more expensive, long-term bonding rather than more painful pay-as-you-go methods; Bureau also monitors federal relief programs, calling for tracking of who gets what.

1945  Norman N. Gill appointed bureau director.

1946  Organization renamed Citizens’ Governmental Research Bureau; reflects being considered research staff for newly formed community organizations.

1950  Bureau provides technical assistance for report assessing efficiency of city of Milwaukee government; more than 1,000 recommendations.

1963  Bureau researcher Paula Lynam retires after 41 years of writing hundreds of reports and serving on dozens of committees; Milwaukee Sentinel writes, "...one of the country’s top women researchers is an unsung heroine in the community to which she has contributed so much...she epitomizes why the Bureau enjoys such confidence and therefore influence among public officials."

1976  Bureau initiates series on area school districts; schooling data used by both plaintiffs and defendants in Milwaukee’s 10-year school desegregation lawsuit.

1984  Gill retires after 39 years; legendary for his passion for good government and championing professionalism in government.

1987  Organization renamed Public Policy Forum: Researching Community Issues; better reflects community dialogue and discussion.

2003  Yale University Press publishes book, "School Choice and the Question of Accountability: The Milwaukee Experience," by Emily Van Dunk (then a Forum researcher) and Annellese Dickman (current Forum director of research); culmination of five years of research into school choice program.

2005  Organization renamed Public Policy Forum: Moving the Region Forward; focus on regional issues and cooperation.

2007  Forum blog, Milwaukee Talkie, debuts.

2009  Forum enters 69th year.