

## Finally in Baghdad

What's it like to get into Baghdad? Fight sand storms into Kuwait, put up with some bureaucratic waiting, hop on a military C-130 to Baghdad International Airport, ride the Rhino into the International Zone, and you're in a place filled with speed bumps and blast walls.

By JOHN CAMP

Kuwait was performing a dust storm on Saturday night. The KLM flight dropped out of a clear sky into a fog of sand and grit, tunneled through it on the runway to the terminal, and pushed its passengers out into a surprisingly cold – a freezing cold – night.

An hour later, on a high-speed highway dotted with abandoned Nissan pickup trucks, and then on a dirt road into the U.S. Army Logistics Support Area (LSA), the night landscape looked exactly like Minnesota in January. Dust had collected on everything, and in the orange sodium-vapor lights, looked white: white road, white embankments, trees rimed with white; but if you went outside in the night, behind your transit tent, you could look up and see stars.

Pierre Rehov was not seeing stars. He was slumped on a couch in the information office, trying to figure out his next step.

Rehov is a French documentary film-maker, who looks exactly like a French documentary film maker should look, with long black hair and dark eyes, shirts that should have been worn by Franz Fanon. He splits his time between Paris and New York; and he has a major problem.

He was set to embed in Iraq. He'd gone

through all the bureaucratic stuff, but at the last minute, he'd lost his cameraman, and had to find a new one. The guy he found was well-known and extremely competent. He was also Mexican. As it turns out, Kuwait has different entry requirements for Mexicans than for Americans. The short version (and there is a long French version) is that they kicked the cameraman out, along with his equipment, and Rehov was left sitting in the information office, with a lot of plans and concepts, but no camera.

"So now what do I do? I try to find a new cameraman, I try to find out what is going on with this other cameraman, where the equipment is – it did not arrive back in New York with him? So what do I do now?"

All of this in an excellent French-accented English. Does he go forward into Iraq and try to find a new cameraman there? Does he bail out, after all the bureaucratic work he's already done? Does he try to find an independent cameraman?

All the army folks are genuinely sympathetic, but nobody has any answers. Rehov is stuck in a bureaucratic hell, searching for some possible route out. For two days, he wanders around the Army LSA, like the ghost of journalists past, trying to work things out by telephone and email.

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By ERIC BOWEN

His future in Iraq still obscure, French filmmaker Pierre Rehov waits in the Combined Press Information Office in Baghdad.

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MINNPOST.WORLD

## Kenyan president stands in the way of healing his nation's wounds

By SUSAN ALBRIGHT

As Ghanaian President John Kufuor prepared to facilitate an end to violence and a way forward in Kenya earlier this week, President Mwai Kibaki complicated the mission and reportedly upset U.S. diplomats in Nairobi by precipitously appointing political cronies to key Cabinet posts. Given the violence that Kenya's disputed Dec. 27 election spurred, said a Financial Times of London editorial, Kibaki's decision was "high-handed and provocative. He seems intent on precipitating a deepening catastrophe, rather than healing the wounds of the nation." On Wednesday Kufuor tried but failed to get Kibaki and his challenger in the election, opposition leader Raila Odinga, to negotiate. The African Union, which Kufuor chairs, announced today that the two had instead agreed to work with former U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

The Daily Nation of Kenya said the president's Cabinet announcement "resulted in an unscheduled meeting between President Kibaki, on the one hand, and the US assistant secretary of state for African Affairs, Ms Jendayi Frazer, accompanied by ambassador Michael Ranneberger. The two are understood to have held 'frank' talks with President Kibaki, resulting in a statement in which the President committed himself to 'constructive and inclusive' dialogue to reach a political solution to the election crisis caused by the outcome."

Despite meeting separately with both Kibaki and Odinga, Kufuor, who is chairman of the African Union, Kufuor could not get them to meet, Reuters reported. Before leaving Nairobi today he said the two leaders had "agreed to work together with a panel of eminent African personalities headed by Mr. Kofi Annan ... towards resolving their differences and all other outstanding issues including constitutional and electoral reforms."

### Open society

The international community is applying pressure on



By GEORGINA CRANSTON

An 11-year-old survivor stands amid the burnt out ruins of a church near Eldoret in western Kenya where at least 18 people were burnt alive on Tuesday during ethnic clashes after disputed elections.

both sides, and not only because of the deaths of hundreds of Kenyans. "The urgency of the situation is only magnified by the critical role Kenya plays geopolitically," wrote Stephanie Hanson in a Council on Foreign Relations analysis. "Like Nigeria and South Africa, Kenya is considered an 'anchor state' by diplomats," she wrote, adding, "It is a relatively open society with a history of multiparty politics and an economy that serves as a regional hub. Due to its proximity to crisis-stricken countries such as Somalia and Sudan, it also houses the headquarters of significant humanitarian operations. ... Nairobi also serves as a strong political partner for the United States. Kenya has facilitated regional diplomatic efforts such as the peace process between north and south Sudan and attempts to reconcile Somalia's warring factions."

Hence the involvement of the African Union and the United States. According to Karen Allen of BBC News, suggested options for resolution "include a change in the constitution to enable the creation of a strong prime ministerial post" for Odinga. But "that

seems an unrealistic possibility," she said. "Firstly, changing the constitution would take time. Also, Mr Odinga was promised the prime ministerial role in the last government and when President Kibaki reneged on the deal he split from the party."

### 'Democratization across the continent'

The Center for Strategic and International Studies' Joel Barkin says shared power won't solve the problems anyway. In a comprehensive essay in Foreign Affairs magazine he said Kenya's recent violence "has deep historical roots and it will take more than a recount or the formation of a national unity government to resolve the crisis." The Kibaki administration, he wrote, "was regarded by most members of Kenya's remaining 41 ethnic groups as a government that favored the Kikuyu [tribe] at the expense of others. The Kikuyu are the largest (22 percent), most educated, and most prosperous ethnic group in Kenya." He said resentment of the Kikuyu "runs particularly deep in the northern Rift Valley, which was once inhabited by Kenya's white set-

tlar community before independence. This region has borne the brunt of post-election violence. Land vacated by the former settlers during the 1960s and early 1970s was purchased by Kikuyus with assistance from the government instead of being returned to the communities from which it had been taken during colonial rule. These Kikuyu settlers have suffered greatly during the past week."

Barkin says only a negotiated deal will ensure stability because Odinga wants "real executive power" and "more importantly, a new constitution for Kenya that will guarantee non-Kikuyu citizens an equitable slice of the pie." He concludes: "Given the prominence of ethnicity in African politics, democratization across the continent will require more than expanding the political and economic rights of individuals. In Kenya – and elsewhere on the continent – accommodation of group rights must be part of the equation."

*Susan Albright, a former editor of the Star Tribune's editorial pages, writes about national and foreign developments.*

## Backing the arts in our back yard and on the campaign trail



**JUDY ARGINTEANU**

The results are in, and after the Iowa caucuses and the New Hampshire primary, the American electorate is clearly showing a stunning groundswell of support for ... anyone's guess. Perhaps the pundits jumped the gun a wee bit after one state caucus? Ya think?

On the face of it, however, Iowa was a marginally better race for arts advocates, regardless of party affiliation. Both of Iowa's winners, Democrat Barack Obama and Republican Mike Huckabee, support the arts, on paper at least, according to Arts Action Fund.

The snobs among us might note that Huckabee has been touring with well-known aesthete Chuck "Walker Texas Ranger" Norris, while Obama has been campaigning with literary maven Oprah Winfrey. Of the two New Hampshire win-

ners, however, only Democrat Hillary Rodham Clinton has a stated arts policy.

### Meanwhile, back in Minneapolis...

Closer to home, in Ward 8 in South Minneapolis, the arts issue will be the focus of local public-policy types at a kick-off event next week for a series of planned monthly meetings on "Arts and Creative Economic Development." Speakers at the Jan. 16th event will be artist Seitu Jones and Humphrey Institute professor Ann Markusen, author of "The Artistic Dividend" and other works analyzing the arts economy.

Although the program focuses on artists and Ward 8, Council Member Elizabeth Glidden emphasizes that the event is open to anyone interested in the issue. This could be a particularly opportune moment to get involved in such an initiative, she said, because the city is updating its 10-year comprehensive plan, which

**"Arts and Creative Economic Development: How can the city of Minneapolis support artists and arts organizations."** Light refreshments provided, and child care will be available.

- 6:30-8 p.m., Wednesday, Jan. 16
- Pillsbury House Theatre, 3501 Chicago Ave. S., Minneapolis
- Ward 8 Council aide Andrea Jenkins, 612-673-2208, [andrea.jenkins@ci.minneapolis.mn.us](mailto:andrea.jenkins@ci.minneapolis.mn.us).

includes a "large section on arts and culture."

One proposal would reinstate a department of arts and culture to help re-establish the arts as a priority in the city. "It's more than just understanding that it makes you feel good to see art in the neighborhood; the arts offer tangible benefits and community development," Glidden says. As an example, she mentions a proposed art center at 38th Street and Chicago Avenue South, a corner that has been in the news in recent years for all the wrong reasons.

"It wouldn't be a huge development project, but it would be a catalytic project," she said.

Markusen, a nationally recognized expert on the role of the arts community in overall economic vitality, agrees that small-scale support can make a significant difference. "There's a lot cities can do just through land-use regulations, where they permit artists to live and work," she says.

Even in an era of tight budgets, there are ways to finance such efforts, she says, citing cities such as Los Angeles and San Francisco, where a hotel/hospitality tax goes to smaller neighborhoods for arts and development efforts.

### Soo Vac benefit

Another way to support the arts is, of course, to buy some. Soo Vac's annual Get Lucky benefit is this Saturday, Jan. 12, featuring work by a raft of local folks including (and this is a much-abbreviated list) Andrea Carlson, Jaron Childs, Jennifer Davis, Clea Felien, Robert Fischer, Alexa Horochowski, Bethany Kalk, John Largaespada, Chris Larson, Lydia Lunch, Rob McBroom, Erika Olson, Amy Rice, Sean Smuda, Angela Strassheim, Twenty-Seven and Cameron Wittig. Other auction items include a signed Les Paul guitar from indie-rock darlings the Hold Steady, formerly of the Twin Cities.

- "Get Lucky" benefit gala for the nonprofit Soo Visual Arts Center
- 7 p.m.-11 p.m., Jan. 12
- Soo Vac, 2640 Lyndale Avenue S., Minneapolis
- \$25; call 612-871-2263 or click <http://www.soovac.org>

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# Finally in Baghdad

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Then he makes his move: Rehov straps himself into a C-130 and heads into Iraq, ready to produce and direct, no equipment in sight.

## Getting there

The biggest problem about getting into Iraq is exactly how to get there.

The Army is willing to take you, but there are all kinds of exceptions and difficulties: getting on a manifest for the unknown numbers of flights coming in or going out, scheduling conflicts, rank considerations -- rank can and does bump prospective travelers off military transportation. Nobody has much problem with that, since it's a war, and the ranking military may really have an urgent need to get where they are going. It does cause unforeseen, unforeseeable and often excruciating delays for people further down the bump list.

Generally, it's like this: Get to Kuwait on commercial transportation -- Northwest Airlines out of Minneapolis to Amsterdam, KLM from Amsterdam to Kuwait; a short drive into the LSA, and then some bureaucratic waiting. After that, a military C-130 to Baghdad International Airport, which is called BIAP, or "buy-op," and then you ride the Rhino into the IZ (eye-zee), which stands for International Zone, which is what the locals call the Green Zone.

Minnesotans who drive past the Minneapolis-St. Paul airport will be familiar with the C-130 -- they are the huge olive-drab canted-tail transport planes often flown in and out by the Air National Guard. The inside of the C-130 Tuesday morning was purely functional: exposed ducts overhead, all kinds of mechanical latches on the unadorned sides, floor and bulkheads, a stepladder lashed to an upright support, and the name "Desert Queen" stenciled on a bulkhead.

And webbing seats. Passengers sit in webbing seats facing each other, feet overlapping, like paratroopers in World War II army movies. Instead of one line, there are two, on opposite sides of the plane. Most of the passengers even look like paratroopers, in the dim interior light: helmets, body armor, guns. Overhead, there is even a static line, for jumpers, but disturbingly, only enough parachutes (attached to the ubiquitous hooks and latches) for the flight crew. The luggage is piled on a pallet, which is conveniently loaded into the back of the plane, right behind the passengers, an innovation that might be considered by Northwest.

The plane smells something of kerosene and crowded people. There is little sound-proofing, so everybody wears earplugs, and nobody talks; you just sit there, trying to avoid playing footsie with the guy opposite.

The approach to Baghdad is intricate -- the plane changes heading several times, and then goes DOWN, as in an elevator. On the ground, at BIAP, after several changes of mind, and a scrounged ride in the back of a pickup truck (the scheduled base bus never showed up), visitors are left at another transportation depot, to wait for the Rhino.

The Rhino -- it's called "riding the Rhino" -- is a convoy of armored buses and armed Humvees, which leaves BIAP at random times: deliberately random for security purposes. This particular Rhino left after a fairly cheerful discussion of what should be done "if we get hit" and the Rhino was left in any of several dismembered configurations; if, for example, the bus should get knocked on its side, and you couldn't get out the side door, there was a conveniently located roof hatch, which would then be a side hatch.

After that brief talk, it was something less than an hour into the IZ, all packed like sardines into the Rhino, all wearing body armor and helmets. On a variation of the fast-food notice, "No shirt, no shoes, no service," the sign at the transport depot said, "No armor, no helmet, no Rhino."

The ride in is fast and rough: there are speed bumps everywhere -- more security.

At the end of the ride, in the IZ, is the CPIC, pronounced Cee-Pik, which is the Combined Press Information Center. There, reporters go through more bureaucratic stuff, like getting an ID card -- all done cheerfully and professionally by a variety of soldiers. For someone who served in the Army during the late 1960s, soldiers of the Third Millennium seem like a different breed altogether: smart, hard-working, sincere, professional, and many, many more of them, female. So many of them female, that their presence is no longer even remarked, and questions about them are regarded as a trifle odd.

## Blast walls everywhere

A few more in-bound observations.

Though it can get cold -- temperatures in the 30s the past few days -- Iraq looks a little bit like a hard-scrabble portion of Dade County, Fla., with dusty palms and tan buildings; the landscape all ochers and umbers. The Rhino takes you passed the famous crossed-swords monument -- smaller than on TV. Here and there are barrel-fires: security guards trying to stay warm, standing around the barrels with M16s hung around their necks.

The American civilians, and there are a lot of them, truck drivers and food-service personnel and security guys, are generally what you'd call burly; too much D-Fac (dining facility) food. The food is good, but not short on calories. In this way, Iraq is exactly like the facilities found



By ERIC BOWEN

at Prudhoe Bay on the North Slope of Alaska: blue collar guys there to do a well-paying job, under conditions of severe stress.

Another thing: everywhere you drive, you see blast walls. Aesthetically, they resemble the familiar concrete lane-dividers used on I-94, except that they may be 10 or 12 or 15 feet high, and a couple of feet thick. There are literally hundreds of miles of them, protecting military installations and IZ neighborhoods; in some ways, they are an index of the massive size of the American intervention here.

When you've seen so many of them, so new, stretching for so many miles, protecting so many buildings, you begin to think about what it took to make them, how much they must cost, what it took to put them in...

And you begin to consider the fact that the army, with a hurricane of private contractors, has essentially moved a major U.S. city to Iraq in the past five years, and built the whole thing from the ground up, from electric outlets and potable water taps, to major generating stations, and roads, and tent cities for troops.

Whatever you may think about the war, it is an impressive feat, even for the new, naive eye.

Then there's Pierre.

Two days after Pierre Rehov was last seen in Kuwait, climbing on a C-130, he is at CPIC in the IZ. In the temporary unisex bunkhouse provided by the Combined Press Information Center, he has created a kind of separate room for himself by hanging blankets around the lower bunk of his bunk bed. His future in Iraq still obscure.

On the other hand, the guy in the next bunk is an independent cameraman, whose current job is running out.

They're talking.

Pierre's operating.

Things are looking up.

*John Camp is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and best-selling novelist who writes under the pen name John Sandford. He can be reached at [jcamp@minnpost.com](mailto:jcamp@minnpost.com).*

## MacPhail Center for Music: a new note for Minneapolis riverfront



LINDA MACK

In Minneapolis' Mill District you can study the city's history, watch a Shakespeare play, eat sushi, buy organic cheese, and climb to the top of a 30-foot-high mound and view the Mississippi River falling over its only waterfall.

Now add music.

This week's opening of the new MacPhail Center for Music near the Milwaukee Road Depot adds another cultural magnet to the burgeoning riverfront. Situated on the same street as the Guthrie Theater, the Mill City Museum, Gold Medal Park and new watering holes and tony lofts, the glass, zinc and steel facility also promises new visibility for the 100-year-old performing arts school – and for its young architect, Minneapolis-based James Dayton.

Performance spaces include the wood-lined 225-seat Antonello Auditorium and a lobby and grand staircase that double as an informal hall. Glass-walled classrooms on the street level and 56 teaching studios stacked in an L-shaped six-story tower maximize the school's activities on its tight corner lot at 501 S. Second St.

"What we're looking at is the future of MacPhail," said David O'Fallon, the music school's president who led the campaign for the \$25 million facility. "It's not just do what we did before in a new place. This transforms the organization."

### Rocky road to the riverfront

Since 1923 MacPhail was housed in a four-story building at 1128 LaSalle Ave. that became infamous for its lack of amenities. Parents and siblings waited for students in cramped hallways. The fourth-floor auditorium as well as all the teaching and practice rooms lacked air-conditioning. Bathrooms were only available on every other floor – a particularly dire situation considering the large numbers of toddlers enrolled in the school's popular Early Child-

hood Arts classes.

The organization began discussing a move to new or remodeled quarters in 2000 and secured an option on the lot at Fifth Avenue and Second Street South in 2001, but plans failed to jell. A design by Nagle Hartray of Chicago didn't generate excitement, and the Guthrie Theater, Walker Art Center and Minneapolis Institute of Arts were conducting their big-bucks fundraising campaigns. Another plan to remodel the Miller Meister Building on First Avenue North didn't materialize either, and by 2004, money had been spent on two designs without any outcome. The MacPhail organization was demoralized.

Then, as the legendary story goes, discouraged board member Margee Bracken was walking with her friend Peggy Lucas of Brighton Development, who suggested she look at Dayton's model for riverfront condos called The Portland. Dayton, a scion of the Minneapolis retail and philanthropic family, founded James Dayton Design in 1997.

"Peggy said he has a very nice manner about him," Bracken said, "and I've always loved his design for the Minnetonka Center for the Arts."

### Dayton steps on board

With Dayton's help, MacPhail's leaders did some serious soul-searching that crystallized in a new business plan. Part of the new thrust was to take some classes to the school's far-flung audience instead of expecting everyone from the seven-county metro area to drive to downtown Minneapolis in the late afternoon.

Two "access sites" planned for Apple Valley and White Bear Lake meant the downtown flagship didn't need to be as large, Bracken said.

Rob Hunter, James Dayton Design's project manager for MacPhail, said the firm spent three months understanding the school's needs and probably considered 100 different schemes before the design was

### Grand opening events

Thursday, Jan. 10

- 12:15 p.m.: Singer Ruth MacKenzie with Dean Magraw on guitar
- 7 p.m.: Master class with pianist Christopher O'Riley

Friday, Jan. 11

- 12:15 p.m.: Cello and percussion ensemble JelloSlave
- 7-10 p.m.: Battle of the Bands Showcase

- MacPhail Center for Music, 501 S. 2nd St., Minneapolis.
- 612-321-0100
- [www.macphail.org](http://www.macphail.org)
- All events are free.

unveiled in July 2005. Like famed California architect Frank Gehry, for whom he worked for five years, Dayton develops designs through block models rather than drawings.

"The turning point was bringing Jim and the team on," O'Fallon said. "I remember the meeting of the capital campaign where he brought in the model. We were on the third architect. He unveiled the model and people went 'ah.'"

### Direct and dynamic

The balsam-wood model showed the building as it stands today.

A two-story cube that angles out toward the corner acts as MacPhail's billboard, Dayton said. On the street level, large glass windows showcase three classrooms/performance spaces. The second floor holds the school's crown jewel – an elegant Douglas fir-lined auditorium focused on an expansive window framing a riverfront view. The window is a beacon on the street.

An L-shaped six-story tower that holds the teaching studios is the backdrop for the cube. Sheathed in 7,000 zinc panels and angling in and out as it rises, the tower has a friendly feel.

The main lobby space stitches the cube and the tower together. Here, at the entrance, is the building's beating heart. A stairway leads up to the auditorium and its inviting lobby, which doubles as a lounge for students' families. Next to the stairway is a set of broader steps that

act as seating for the informal performance space tucked into the first-floor lobby. The lobby, which is sky-lit from above and open to the first three floors of the tower, is like an indoor plaza – full of movement and life.

### Looking forward

O'Fallon said it's hard to imagine where the building will take the organization.

"We're going from a climate of make-do – hold it together with baling wire and string to 'oh-my-god, we can really do what we want to do for everybody,'" O'Fallon said.

Signs are pointing up. During last weekend's festivities, the registration lines for classes were long. The three-part Minnesota Orchestra Chamber Music Series booked for the Antonello Auditorium sold out in a matter of hours. Bracken said riverfront neighbors are looking forward to stopping by for late-afternoon concerts or music education talks. O'Fallon said students have already played at the Mill City Farmer's Market in the summer, and he's angling to send them out on the Stone Arch Bridge.

In the summer, he plans not just to let music waft out of the building onto the riverfront's streets and sidewalks but also to host outdoor concerts in the facility's green space out front. Bravissimo!

*Linda Mack, a former architecture critic for the Star Tribune, can be reached at [lmack@minnpost.com](mailto:lmack@minnpost.com).*

## Pawlenty's plan for new state park drawing attention – and questions



**RON WAY**

One consequence of Gov. Tim Pawlenty's proposal to add an expensive new state park near Tower, Minn., is that his administration's lack of support for state parks and trails has drawn some unwanted scrutiny.

On Friday at the Capitol a joint hearing by the Minnesota House and Senate environmental committees will examine whether it's a good idea to spend upwards of \$70 million for Vermilion State Park at a time when there's a \$100 million spending backlog to maintain what's already in the parks system.

Park spending is down 38

percent and spending on trails has spiraled to all-time lows during Pawlenty's administration.

The committees are chaired by Sen. Ellen Anderson, DFL-St. Paul, and Rep. Jean Wagenius, DFL-Minneapolis.

"This will be the first time in years that parks and trails have received this kind of attention," said Judy Erickson, lobbyist for the Minnesota Parks and Trails Council.

Legislators will hear from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the lead agency for the state parks system. The DNR is also leading the effort for the proposed 2,500-acre park on Lake Vermilion in northeastern Minnesota.

In a surprise announcement, Pawlenty said in July that he would recommend the new park. While there's no official word on what the state may have to pay for the site, the landowner, U.S. Steel Corp., has put the price at \$45 million. The DNR estimates it will cost up to \$25 million to make the park attractive to the 300,000 visitors each year. Supporters of the park say it would bring in an additional \$8.5 million in local spending.

There is a recurring backlog of \$100 million in maintaining the state's parks and trails that dates back several administrations, Erickson said.

Parks spending will be key part of at least two proposals before the 2008 Legislature

when it convenes in St. Paul next month. The Parks and Trails Council along with other advocates are recommending some \$105 million in new parks acquisitions be included in a large bonding bill that legislators will consider.

Parks would also receive about 14 percent of money raised from a new sales tax that likely will be approved by the Legislature after years of debate. The proposal would constitutionally guarantee outdoors and arts spending. Legislative approval means the dedicated tax plan would have to pass a statewide referendum before it would take effect.

**Park spending is down 38 percent and spending on trails has spiraled to all-time lows during Pawlenty's administration.**

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**MinnPost** in Print

## Beyond corn ethanol: Minnesota's rural economy positioned for enormous gains

Last of four articles.

By RON WAY

Production of corn ethanol is rapidly expanding, but a "next generation" renewable fuel – ethanol made from grasses and "biomass" like wood and organics – is on the horizon. It's a potentially huge development for Minnesota's countryside that could continue an economic resurgence in rural areas fueled by ethanol.

Despite concerns about its effects, the corn ethanol industry is only hitting its stride. Energy legislation signed last month by President Bush mandates a doubling of ethanol made from corn, even though it already consumes 20 percent of the nation's corn crop and with the new law is estimated to rise to a third of the crop.

The energy law, passed with broad support in Congress, also mandates that by 2022 the United States produce 21 billion gallons of ethanol from grass cellulose and biomass from wood, animal waste and even garbage.

The ambitious goal is prompted by rising concerns about U.S. dependency on oil imports and the effects of burning oil whose carbon emissions are linked to climate change.

Meeting the non-corn ethanol goal is certain to induce still more rural economic growth that could surpass the explosive expansion of corn ethanol production in Minnesota and across the Great Plains.

### Technology not ready

But questions loom over how much can be done and on what timetable.

Consider: it will have taken 30 years for U.S. corn ethanol production to attain the new goal of 15 billion gallons (with 7.2 billion gallons currently produced, it's about half there).

Corn has long been an established crop and distilling ethanol from it utilizes a centuries old liquor-making process. However, no cellulosic or biomass ethanol is currently being commercially produced. The technology to

make it happen is years off, and cultivation processes to produce the grass feedstock is far from established.

Still, Congress has directed that non-corn ethanol production go from zero to 21 billion gallons in half the time it took the much simpler corn ethanol industry to mature.

"A lot of things have to go right within the space of only a few years," said Aaron Brady, an energy expert at Cambridge Energy Research Associates, an international energy consulting service headquartered in Massachusetts.

Minnesota is poised to gain enormously from "next generation" ethanol. The state has prairies where needed grasses can thrive, as they did before 30,000 square miles of sod was busted in the Great Plains to raise grain crops during pioneer settlement. Minnesota also has forests for wood biomass and a major urban center that generates copious organic wastes that now goes to landfills.

"We're in the bulls-eye of ethanol growth," said Don Arnosti, an agriculture and forestry expert with the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy of Minneapolis. Arnosti is a leader in a multi-pronged push by advocacy groups seeking legislative funding and policy support for alternative fuels.

Estimates vary on the value of a non-corn ethanol industry. However, economists generally peg a fully mature corn ethanol industry at about \$7 billion annually with 25,000 jobs scattered across Minnesota's rural areas, helping reversing an economic decline that's been steady since World War II.

### 'Ready to fire'

A new ethanol industry likely would be valued at more than twice what corn ethanol has meant for the state's economy.

"We understand that the opportunities here are enormous," said Michael Bull, an assistant commissioner of the Minnesota Commerce Department and Gov. Tim Pawlenty's point person for energy policy.

State government is planning for "next generation" renewable fuels by supporting research and by working to amass a ready reserve of lands to grow prairie and other grasses. The state also is creating market pull for the fuel by becoming the nation's first to require refiners to blend gasoline with 20 percent ethanol (all that's needed is for the Environmental Protection Agency to designate E20 as a legal fuel, which is expected to happen).

"We're at the ready-aim point with renewable fuels," Bull said. "As it comes time we'll be ready to fire."

Unlike corn, native prairie grasses are low maintenance: they are perennials that obviate annual plowing, they require little added water and no chemical fertilizers, and they'll grow most anywhere on the prairie.

University of Minnesota ecologist Clarence Lehman says prairie grasses also provide quality habitat for varied wildlife populations that have suffered historical declines as the prairie was plowed and millions of wetland acres drained. Plus, the energy gain with cellulosic ethanol is more than eight times that of corn ethanol.

Lehman is part of a team of university researchers led by David Tillman who are conducting landmark studies on the value of prairie grass in ethanol production. Tillman, Lehman and Jason Hill published an article in Science last December that provoked worldwide discussion on grasses as an alternative to corn ethanol and helped generate public and political support for grasses as a fuel source.

But there are challenges:

- Breaking down complex polymers in cellulose to simple sugars for fermentation requires commercially affordable enzymes or a thermal-chemical process, and breakthroughs are at least three years away.

- For native grasses to again flourish on the prairie, seeds specific to each area need to be grown in large incubator plots. It could take a decade or more for sufficient seed stock to potentially plant up to 3,000 square miles

of prairie grasses.

- Processing plants would have to be built or converted to distill cellulosic grasses or biomass, and that would be expensive.

- Farmers would need financial incentives to switch from high-profit corn to grass crops that take up to three years to mature.

"It will cost a lot of money, on a scale of the investment that was made for corn ethanol," said state Rep. Al Junke, DFL-Willmar, who chairs the House Agriculture Committee that this year may consider legislation that would pump \$46 million into a plan to acquire prairie land to grow cellulosic grasses.

Ethanol production in general is enabled by billions of dollars in public subsidies. And for the nascent industry to flourish, government must require reluctant refiners to add ethanol to gasoline and require automakers to produce "flex fuel" engines capable of burning higher and higher ethanol blends.

Ethanol advocates point to Brazil as a country that has reduced oil dependency through ethanol.

Brazil's sugar cane-based ethanol has reduced the country's oil imports from 80 percent during the 1973 oil embargo to zero. All cars now sold in Brazil are "flex fuel" to burn any combination of gas and ethanol.

While corn ethanol is currently the renewable fuel of choice in the United States, it's encountered a chorus of concern about using a food staple for fuel, the negative environmental effects of growing all that corn, and the vast quantities of water used to process corn ethanol. (Combined, Minnesota ethanol plants annually consume as much water as the annual residential needs for 80,000 people.)

**Read the entire article – and the first three stories of this four-part series – at [www.minnpost.com](http://www.minnpost.com).**

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COMMUNITY VOICES

# Retention 2010: How to keep good employees in tight labor market

By Teresa J. Rothausen-Vange, Ph.D.

The unemployment rate is often an indicator of how well our economy is doing. But in the very near future, unemployment figures may become far less relevant. Why? Because we are quickly approaching a seismic shift in the number and types of employable workers in our country.

More than 70 million baby boomers – upward of 40 percent of the workforce – will reach the traditional retirement age of 65 over the next 15 years. But only 40 million new workers will enter the workforce.

2010 is forecast to be the beginning of an upward trend in severe labor shortages, especially in skilled labor. It costs an employer 25 percent to 150 percent of an employee’s annual compensation to recruit, select and train him/her. The projected labor shortage may result in a significant increase in this expense.

## Double-barreled challenge

Along with the forecasted labor shortage, the new workforce is increasingly diverse in many dimensions. The U.S. Census Bureau has projected that while the white population will grow from 195 million to 210 million by 2050, the proportion of the labor force that will be white will decrease from almost 70 percent to 50 percent. People of color and ethnic minorities will make up that difference. For example, Hispanics of all races are projected to increase from 12 percent to 24 percent by 2050.

Baby boomers also may stay at work longer, expanding diversity in age. Gender will play a role as well. In 2005, 46.5 percent of America’s workforce was female, although women represented less than 8 percent of top management (40 years after civil rights legislation promised to

bring equality).

Thus, American business is looking down a double barrel of workforce challenges: a decreasing number of skilled workers who are increasingly diverse in dimensions that employers still haven’t figured out how to retain.

What can businesses do? The best way to deal with the upcoming labor shortage is to become the kind of workplace where many different types of people want to stay. But how?

I looked for answers to this question during our last significant labor shortage, and my findings may provide a clue to what employers can expect in the near future.

## Research on retention

Previous turnover and retention research shows that, all else being equal in terms of opportunities, people who are more dissatisfied with certain facets of their jobs are more likely to leave. University of St. Thomas business alumni probably remember learning that skill variety, task identity and task significance are important. Additional key aspects of a satisfactory work environment include the amount and quality of feedback, level of autonomy, compensation, working conditions and quality of co-worker and supervisor relationships. But do these facets matter to a new, more diverse workforce?

I interviewed 45 – and surveyed 158 – former employees of Minnesota companies with reputations as good places to work. These former employees represented valuable resources to the companies. Sixty-six percent of survey respondents indicated that their last performance appraisal had been above average or higher, and the sample included 20 percent who had been selected for some type of high-performance management program. The employees in this study represent

valuable human capital in other ways as well. Seventy-three percent worked between 40 and 70 hours per week; 83 percent have at least a college degree; and 29 percent have graduate degrees.

Survey respondents were asked to rank more than 150 items on a scale of 1 (an item that made it very hard to leave the company) to 7 (the lack of an item was a primary reason for leaving). Statistical analysis of responses yielded 16 facets that these former employees considered in their decisions to leave.

## Top reasons for leaving

The sample of former employees reported the following top reasons for leaving their good jobs:

1. Executive team leadership
2. Executive ethics
3. Facilitation of their careers
4. Company culture

A stunning finding of this research is that the top two facets employees cited as reasons for leaving – executive leadership competence and executive ethics – didn’t even register in research done 10 or 20 years ago. The latter was especially important for women and for younger workers in this sample. Employees cited a lack of upper management communication about decisions and changes, executives’ poor general management skills, a sense that executives weren’t employee advocates, as well as a belief that upper management could not be relied upon and trusted and that upper management wasn’t consistent and stable. One employee offered the following explanation:

“I have worked for companies – large and small, private and public – and I am used to change. I’m used to layoffs. I’m used to reorganizations, and that’s fine. But when there is a lack of direction ... it’s very frustrating ... to [try to] retain your staff and keep them motivated. There was such

a lack of communication and such a lack of direction.”

A related facet was executive ethics, or the sense that upper managers weren’t using morals or telling the truth consistently. This facet was especially important to women’s decisions to leave. One woman said, “After a while, it just got to the point where I could not conscientiously represent the company anymore in the marketplace.” Another said, “It got to a point where I realized that ... I didn’t want to be associated with the things that were going on and the people that were [in leadership].”

When I asked for examples, I heard a lot of stories. One woman told me about how a colleague working on her team had mysteriously disappeared and the team didn’t know why. She said, “We found out later [that executives decided] to lay her off and they didn’t want to tell us because they were concerned that we’d leave before the project was done. They wanted us to finish.”

I asked her how that played into her decision to leave and she said, “Oh, it [played] a big part. We lost our trust in management.”

People want to feel that they are part of an organization that is being led by competent, ethical leaders. These concerns about leadership and ethics were highly related to problems with company culture and strategy (the fourth- and seventh-most commonly cited reasons for leaving). Leadership sets the course for the company as well as the tone of the climate, so these strong relationships aren’t surprising.

*This article is reprinted from the fall edition of B., the magazine of the Opus College of Business of the University of St. Thomas. Teresa Rothausen-Vange is an associate professor of management at the school.*