

# Daily Globe

## **Letter: LGA cuts would worsen imbalance in state**

*Craig Clark, City of Worthington administrator*

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There has been a lot of talk about state financial aid to cities called local government aid, or LGA for short. Many residents may have heard of the program but not fully appreciated how it works and if it is effective. Many critics have said local municipalities are just whiners as the state seems to keep finding its way back to cutting LGA. We do not feel the term whiners is an accurate portrayal against a government program that is actually working.

LGA's goal is to provide assistance to similarly sized cities to provide basic government services at an equal level, whether you live in Wayzata or Worthington. The recent proposal by Gov. Tim Pawlenty would cut LGA by 15 percent in 2009 and 31 percent in 2010. While we do not want to minimize the severity of the current budget shortfall, the proposal takes us away from being one Minnesota, where a resident in any community can expect similar services. Targeting a proven program with success exacerbates the significant divide between the haves and have nots.

LGA assistance considers a communities tax capacity and, in our case, recognizes Worthington taxpayers are paying a good share of taxes related to the valuation of their homes and businesses. The city is not able to simply levy more taxes to pay for core services. This is the fundamental basis for LGA. With the budget reductions, this leaves the city in the untenable position of raising the tax burden on our residents and businesses or reducing services.

This gives rise to making our community less attractive to live and carry on a business. We have seen far too many young adults head to the Cities, and we continue to work hard to attract businesses to grow our economic base. State officials should recognize that Minnesota does well when all of its communities are strong.

We welcome the call of those who are looking at existing programs that are not working and have caused our fiscal house to get out of line. All programs need a stark analysis of their efficiency and effectiveness, but LGA meets the mark of delivering on its promise of ensuring we have one Minnesota.

Worthington will look for consolidation and opportunities to work with neighboring cities, counties or school districts. We maintain no municipal turf. We are also willing to participate in the current fiscal crisis, but we ask that State officials first apply an equal test to other program areas to see if they deliver on their promises like LGA delivers.