Virtually everyone running for office this election season is advocating for "tax fairness." But what do they really mean by it, and how could it affect the prospects for major tax reform in 2013?

Minnesota Revenue Commissioner Myron Frans has traveled the state, listening to Minnesotans' ideas for tax reform. They will inform a tax reform proposal Gov. Mark Dayton will release in January 2013. Anticipating the discussion, the Citizens League – which 40 years ago helped create the "Minnesota Miracle," a fiscal deal that helped put Minnesota on an upward trajectory of prosperity – launched an independent effort asking Minnesotans to weigh in on tax reform – in informative, nonpartisan settings.

"Times have changed since the Minnesota Miracle, and so must the deal," said Sean Kershaw*, Citizens League executive director. "Tax reform will require leadership. But leadership has to understand how Minnesotans define 'fairness' – that it is as much about the value of spending as the way we are taxed."*

The Citizens League has engaged nearly 300 people from across all political viewpoints so far. Consistent themes are emerging in the preliminary findings, suggesting the need for much broader conversation if *any* tax reform proposal is to gain widespread acceptance. Those findings include:

• Fairness is the top priority for Minnesotans on tax reform, but not the only one.

• Only 3% of participants said that Minnesota's tax system is as fair as possible.

• Definitions of fairness vary, and there is no clear consensus. Those based on what we get for our taxes are slightly more popular than ones based on who bears the tax burden.

• No matter what system of taxes is in place, a significant number of Minnesotans won't perceive it as fair unless they believe they are getting a good value for what they pay. Tax fairness is about spending reform and value.

• The political discussion around the 47 percent of Americans who pay no federal income tax obscures the fact that virtually every adult Minnesotan pays state and local taxes

The Citizens League will be continuing its public conversations, with open workshops scheduled for: **Oct. 30** in Minnetonka; **Nov. 7** in St. Paul; and **Nov. 14** in Rosemount. For more information – including a rough estimate of the total state and local taxes an individual pays – or to register for upcoming workshops, go to www.commoncentsmn.org.

For 60 years, the Citizens League has created common ground across parties and ideologies to solve some of the biggest challenges facing Minnesota. On issues like schools, taxes, transportation, health care, and water, some of Minnesota's greatest public achievements have

emerged from the Citizens League. Citizens League members connect with other Minnesotans, learn to lead on issues that matter to them and create solutions that achieve the common good.