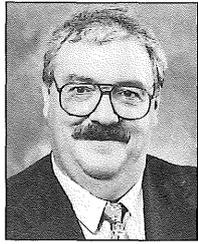


Delmont keeps an open mind to aid constituents

After more than two decades in the political chorus, Rep. Mike Delmont (DFL-Lexington) is finally taking a leading role.



Rep. Mike Delmont

Delmont decided to run for office himself after helping in numerous state campaigns. While this is his first term, his past work with both lawmakers and the Legislature (as communications coordinator for the Minnesota State Patrol) has

put him at ease in his new job.

"Mostly in trenches," is how he describes his long-standing political activism. "I never did aspire to any district offices or central committees. I just felt I could do more working for candidates.

"And I was more comfortable doing that. I love going door-to-door, and I love meeting people and talking to people."

Redistricting presented an opportunity that the former Lexington City Council and Centennial School Board member couldn't pass by. Besides creating an open seat, the district was dramatically altered.

"What had grown into kind of a large district

that encompassed part of Ramsey County and Anoka County shrunk back to just Blaine and Lexington," he said. (Lexington, incidentally, is named twice in Minnesota — there's also a smaller one in Le Sueur County).

Delmont said his district runs the whole income gamut from highly affluent to very poor. At each point on the spectrum, however, the top concern is high property taxes, followed closely by jobs.

"A lot of senior citizens are afraid of losing their homes. A lot of people who have saved for years to buy homes that were a bit more expensive than the norm are afraid of losing their homes," he said. "It was across-the-board anxiety."

While keeping those concerns in mind, Delmont isn't coming to his initial term with a set agenda.

"I like to consider myself a generalist," he said. "I'm not zeroed in on any specific issues. I like to do as much as I can for as many people as I can. That's why I'm here."

Like other first-termers, Delmont said his fellow newcomers will make their presence felt.

"They're a little bit older, they have experience in civic affairs, some of them are very well educated," he said. "I think they're very bright,

and they'll add a lot."

As one of 51 suburban legislators, Delmont said he is more interested in finding common ground with colleagues from rural and urban areas than in creating a separate voting bloc.

"Part of our goal here is to get people to understand what's happening in the suburbs and how we have so much in common between the inner city and the suburbs, and the suburbs and rural Minnesota," he said. "There really is a lot of commonality, and the only way we can find out about each other is to keep the lines of communication open."

—Jim Anderson

District 51A

Population: 33,075

Distribution: 99 percent of residents live in urban areas, 1 percent rural.

County: Anoka

Largest city: Blaine (portion)

Location: north Metro

1992 presidential election results:

Clinton/Gore: 44.1 percent

Bush/Quayle: 28.3 percent

Perot/Stockdale: 26.9 percent

Other: 0.7 percent