

Business owner aims to make Minnesota competitive

By Jon Fure

Rep. Dan Dorman (R-Albert Lea) says he feels lucky because serving in the House has turned his avocation into his vocation.



Rep. Dan Dorman

"Having something you take an interest in — politics has always been kind of a hobby for me — and all of a sudden you're doing it as a job, is like a dream come true," he said.

Part of Dorman's interest in politics comes from

his other job, as owner of Hanson Tire Service in Albert Lea, which is just north of the Iowa border. Minnesota's higher taxes make it difficult for many businesses in southern Minnesota to compete with those in Iowa, South Dakota, or Wisconsin, he said.

"Part of my business is selling farm tires, and I'm not competitive five miles south of my business," he said.

Some businesses have adapted by relocating or establishing additional offices in neighboring states, thereby taking jobs away from Minnesota, Dorman said.

Dorman has worked toward solutions to those problems as a member of the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce board. He said he has met with his local legislators many times in recent years to present ideas on economic development issues such as workers' compensation reform and commercial/industrial property tax reform.

That experience is especially helpful now that he sits on the other side of the desk,

Dorman said. One of his goals as a new House member is to support legislation to improve Minnesota's business climate.

Most of Dorman's efforts so far have been focused on reducing taxes. He's sponsoring a bill (HF2) that would reduce income taxes, restructure property taxes, and phase out the health care provider tax. Dorman said he is optimistic that the bill will become law, and that it will be the largest state tax cut in Minnesota's history.

As sponsor of that bill, Dorman said he's worked closely with House staff to determine the projected financial impacts of proposed tax cuts.

"If you want to take an across-the-board half-percent increase in every classification, they develop a computer report that would tell you the financial impacts in the future," he said. "You have to ask whether the state can afford to do that."

Getting the bill into its final form has involved repeating that process under different scenarios and deciding how each tax classification would change. Dorman said he has had input from other House members, staff, and lobbyists, and he has been reading detailed budget information and fiscal notes from the Department of Revenue.

Dorman also said he is the only freshman with a coach — former House member Bob Haukoos, also of Albert Lea, who is now the official doorman for the House chamber.

Dorman represents District 27A, which covers Freeborn County. He describes the district as economically and culturally diverse. Instead of a dominant employer or industry, it

has many small businesses and family farms.

"There is no 5,000-pound gorilla, so we kind of have to fend for ourselves to create jobs," he said. "We haven't enjoyed the economic boom that other parts of the state have experienced."

That could change in the near future, Dorman said, as an ethanol plant is in the planning stages for that area. Not only would the plant create new jobs, it would enhance the state's agriculture industry, he said.

Dorman hopes to help secure funding for that project and for plans to clean up pollution in Albert Lea Lake, which he believes would bring more tourism into the district.

He serves on the House Agriculture Policy, Jobs and Economic Development Policy, and Taxes committees as well as on the Property Tax Division of the Taxes Committee.

He said the day-to-day challenges of his new job haven't diminished the thrill of serving in the House.

"I'm still very proud every time I drive down the highway and see a sign that says Freeborn County," he said. "It's a lot of responsibility."

District 27A

1995 population: 32,759
Largest city: Albert Lea
County: Freeborn
Location: southern Minnesota
Top concern: "Hard working families in Minnesota deserve lower taxation. The more money we put back in their hands, the better off we will be as a state."

— Rep. Dan Dorman

Frequently called numbers

(Area code 651)

Secretary of the Senate
 231 Capitol 296-0271
 Voice mail/order bills 296-2343
Chief Clerk of the House
 211 Capitol 296-2314
Index, Senate
 110 Capitol 296-2887
Index, House
 211 Capitol 296-6646
Information, Senate
 231 Capitol 296-0504
Information, House
 175 State Office Building 296-2146

Committee Hotline, Senate 296-8088
Committee Hotline, House 296-9283
Sergeant at Arms, Senate
 Senate Chamber 296-7159/6-1119
Sergeant at Arms, House
 45 State Office Building 296-4860
Legislative Reference Library
 645 State Office Building 296-3398
Revisor of Statutes
 700 State Office Building 296-2868
Governor's Office
 130 Capitol 296-3391

Attorney General's Office
 102 Capitol 296-6196
Secretary of State's Office
 180 State Office Building 296-9208
Capitol Security
 B-4 Capitol 296-6741
Emergency 296-2100
TTY, Senate 296-0250
 Toll free 1-888-234-1112
TTY, House 296-9896
 Toll free 1-800-657-3550