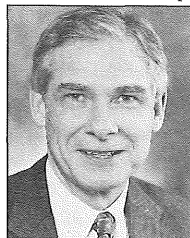


Huntley wants health reform for northeastern Minnesota

At first, Rep. Tom Huntley (DFL-Duluth) said he was a little perplexed by his committee assignments.

As an associate professor at the University of Minnesota-Duluth's (UMD) School of Medicine, a seat on the Human Services Finance Division seemed a logical and welcome choice. But the others — on the labor, banking, and insurance panels — struck him as slightly haphazard picks.



Rep. Tom Huntley

But after two months of legislative hearings, he's seen a pattern develop.

"With Financial Institutions and Insurance, a big part of our focus is health care. And when you take Labor-Management [Relations], what they discuss most is workers' compensation, which is a health care issue, too. So every committee I'm on has to do with health care in one way or another."

Huntley says that the impetus for health care reform — at both the state and federal level — makes this exactly the right time to be at the state Capitol.

"Things are going to be happening over the next four to six years that are going to revolu-

tionize health care, and I want to make sure that's going to end up good for rural Minnesota," he said.

"With all of the changes coming down in health care reform... [they] may work fine here in the metro area, but nobody's got a grip yet how they're going to work in rural parts of the state."

Although his district encompasses Duluth and surrounding townships, Huntley said he hopes to become an advocate for all of northeastern Minnesota.

As a four-year Duluth City Council member and later as president of the Seaway Port Authority, Huntley has seen the region's fortunes rise through the 1970s, crash with the steel and agricultural industry slides of the 1980s, and begin to rebound in recent years.

To prevent the boom-bust cycle from repeating, Huntley said education will be the key to diversified economic success.

"I'd like to see UMD in particular and maybe some other higher education initiatives in northeast Minnesota undergo an upgrade," he said. "A research-based university is a real anchor."

Huntley also is strongly behind a school funding reform package that seeks to extend state support for so-called "property-poor" districts.

Health care reform, rural development, and enhancing education opportunities comprise a lengthy agenda for any lawmaker. But like many of the prospective doctors he instructs, Huntley said he will have to become a specialist of sorts.

"I'd like to make an impact in both rural health care and in higher education," he said. "I don't want to spend the rest of my life here. Obviously, you can't do it all in two years but it probably can be done in 10 years or so."

"If I see some significant progress in those two things, then I'd feel like I've done something and be ready to move on."

—Dave Price

District 6B

Population: 32,255

Distribution: 73.2 percent urban, 26.8 percent rural

County: St. Louis

Largest City: Duluth

Location: northeastern Minnesota

1992 presidential election results:

Clinton/Gore: 50.6 percent

Bush/Quayle: 28.4 percent

Perot/Stockdale: 20.6 percent

Other: 0.4 percent

Evans brings wide-ranging experience to newest job

In many ways, Rep. Geri Evans (DFL-New Brighton) typifies what is already proving to be a remarkable class of first-term representatives.



Rep. Geri Evans

Like many of her first-term colleagues, it's hard to make the "novice" label stick given her lengthy resumé of public service. And like most of her peers, she views the task of making policy with a sense of vocation.

"I have a strong belief that public policy should be elevated in the general public's mind," she said. "But in order to do that, public policy-makers have to do two things — make better public policy and do a much better job of communicating that to the public."

"I think we could do a better job on both," she said.

Evans brings to her new job a background hard to match among her colleagues, first-termers or otherwise. "You name a field, I've probably been in it," she quipped.

She's taught school at every possible level, from nursery school to teaching graduate level courses in small business and personnel admin-

istration. She's put those business theories to work as a business consultant and in marketing.

Evans served two terms on the St. Anthony-New Brighton School Board, including a stint as chairwoman. She currently works as an education equity consultant, working with school districts around the state to ensure students get the same quality of education regardless of gender, cultural background or physical disabilities.

Tack on lobbying and newspaper work, and the list is almost finished. Evans is also studying for her doctorate degree in educational administration.

And she's also raised two children, who mirror her involvement in issues.

Evans' background naturally leads to concern about education issues, but changes buffeting her district have made economic development and housing a priority as well.

Having run for her seat in both 1990 and 1992, Evans noted a stark contrast between the elections in her constituents' concern for the economy.

"It [the economy] was very much out there," she said of last fall's election. "It convinced me I'd better ask to be involved in economic development, housing, things like that — because

my district was reflecting that downturn in the economy."

There's a dawning reality that staid suburbs like New Brighton and Mounds View will be grappling with issues traditionally viewed as belonging only to the inner city.

"Poverty is galloping right out to us... and we're not ready for it," Evans said.

The group of 34 new representatives is already making their presence felt, she added. "We certainly are a force to be contended with."

"I suspect that we're older than the average crop of first-termers," she said. "... And we have a great diversity of experience."

—Jim Anderson

District 52B

Population: 32,877

Distribution: 100 percent in urbanized areas

County: Ramsey

Largest City: New Brighton

Location: north Metro

1992 presidential election results:

Clinton/Gore: 44.3 percent

Bush/Quayle: 32.1 percent

Perot/Stockdale: 22.9 percent

Other: 0.7 percent