

safety legislation and the Wetlands Conservation Act of 1991. He served as a sponsor of all four farm safety laws that passed during his time in the House. And as a co-sponsor of the wetlands law, he worked to make sure that the concerns of farmers were addressed while also improving the environment.

Dille hasn't hesitated to criticize the size and structure of state government, including the Legislature. His recommendations have included closing the University of Minnesota Law School, reducing the size of the Legislature and/or its staff, freezing government salaries, and decreasing the number of legal holidays for the public sector.

Before running for the House, Dille served as a township supervisor and later as a county commissioner. He said that an odd aspect of moving up the political ladder is that "in a way you have less power" when you move to a larger body. He says his influence over a vote declined from 33 percent as one of three township supervisors, to 20 percent as one of five county commissioners, to less than 1 percent as one of 134 House members.

Dille said he hopes to reduce that trend if he's elected to the Senate. As one of 67 senators, his vote would represent 1.5 percent of those cast.

—Mary Ann Schoenberger



Alice Johnson

Rep. Alice Johnson was a veteran of the House even before she started her first term; she worked there as a secretary for 14 years.

Now, after serving for six years as the representative from Spring Lake Park, Johnson may be leaving the state House to look for a bigger one — the U.S. House of Representatives in Washington, D.C.

She is mounting a campaign against Rep. Gerry Sikorski for the 6th District Congressional seat that takes in much of the northern Twin Cities suburb area.

But should Sikorski receive the DFL party endorsement at the May 9 congressional district convention, Johnson said she'll drop her quest and run for her current seat instead.

Running against an incumbent is a tall task, but uphill battles are nothing new to Johnson. Her first run for the Legislature against an incumbent was almost over before it began. Back in 1986, the House Rules and Legislative Administration Committee tried to establish a rule preventing legislative employees from running for office without taking a leave of absence.

But Johnson, who was her family's main breadwinner at that time, lobbied hard and prevented the rule from being adopted. And then she went on to win the election by a mere 132 votes.

Johnson says that her major accomplishment in the House was bringing "a focus on the importance of dealing with young children." She sponsored a 1991 law that created a Legislative Commission on Children, Youth, and Families, and was elected its chair.

Although the governor vetoed funding for the commission, Johnson held meetings anyway, including a two-day conference on children's issues, and compiled a report on the subject.

As for the Legislature, Johnson said her main frustration has been with the overall structure of the House, which she says leads to "segmentation" of issues.

In fact, as one of her last requirements to get a bachelor's degree in Organizational Management and Communication from Concordia College, Johnson is writing a paper on how the segmentation of issues affects children's issues.

Johnson said she would miss the friendships, excitement, and fun of working on worthwhile projects at the House. But she expects to do more of the same thing if elected to Congress.

—Mary Ann Schoenberger



Ken Nelson

Citing a desire to pursue creative reform of education and government from outside the Legislature, Rep. Ken Nelson (DFL-Mpls) said he will retire from his House seat after the 1992 session.

"I want to create a new future," said Nelson.

Nelson's retirement will end 20 years of service in the House. He has served on a variety of committees but has left his mark in the education area. He has been chair of the Education Finance Division since 1983 and has served on the Education Committee since 1973.

As one of his final acts last month, Nelson pulled out a camera and took pictures of the division members, staff, and the audience. Division members, in turn, praised Nelson as a leader in educational policy. "Ken has led us in caring for kids in the K-12 system second to none," said Rep. Jerry Bauerly (DFL-Sauk Rapids).

Nelson said that in the last 10 years, he has seen significant reform in the quality of education in Minnesota, sending the message that "public education is here to serve the students, and not just those who are employed in it.

"We, in Minnesota, are fortunate that we have a Legislature which is always trying to improve the quality of education," he said.

Nelson believes that the establishment of the Minnesota Academic Excellence Foundation in 1983 and the development of performance-based education are