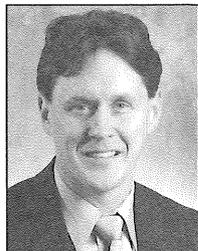


Success the second time

Dean is lone Republican to unseat a DFL incumbent

By RUTH DUNN

Rep. Matt Dean (R-Dellwood) describes himself as a citizen legislator. He'd like to see more accountants, pipe fitters, physicians, plumbers, etc., in the House. "Each profession brings a set of skills that could benefit the Legislature."



Rep. Matt Dean

As an architect, Dean begins a project with the end result in mind. He works to bring people together to complete the task. "Those are skills easily transferable to being a legislator," he adds.

Dean first ran in a 2003 special election to fill the seat vacated by Mark Holsten who was appointed deputy commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. He lost by an 11 percent margin to Rebecca Otto,

a DFLer. However, Dean took the historically Republican seat away from her by a 3.3 percent margin in November. He was the only Republican to win a seat from the DFL in 2004.

Dean says his constituents are looking for productivity from this session. "The public wants us to move forward and get the job done," he said.

Jobs and the economy are big issues in his district. "You might not expect that in my district, which is fairly affluent, but many family budgets are based on two good incomes in a family," explains Dean. "There's a lot of apprehension about the economy; they want to know things are getting better."

Dean has been assigned to four committees: Capital Investment, Civil Law and Elections, Education Policy and Reform, and Health Policy and Finance.

Dean earned a bachelor of architecture at the University of Minnesota and has his own

DISTRICT 52B

2002 Population: 36,813
 Largest city: Stillwater
 County: Washington
 Location: eastern Twin Cities metropolitan area
 Top concerns: Economy, health care, education

A leadership-training program helped Dean develop a fascination with the relationship between business and government.

architecture firm in St. Paul.

A leadership-training program helped Dean develop a fascination with the relationship between business and government. He worked on several campaigns before stepping up to the plate himself.

Dean met his wife, Laura, when both were in kindergarten. She is an obstetrician who has delivered more than 1,000 babies. The couple has three children: Marta, 8, Jack, 6, and Jane, 2.

Education advocate

Building good relationships produces legislative results

By PATTY JANOVEC

Rep. Denise Dittrich (DFL-Champlin) knows she can't accomplish anything by herself, and that cultivating good relationships produces positive results. She believes this philosophy helped her defeat five-term representative Bill Haas last November.



Rep. Denise Dittrich

Her background of community involvement includes seven years on the Anoka-Hennepin School Board, and 15 years as a fifth- and sixth-grade teacher.

If she would have been given the opportunity to introduce the first bill of the session, Dittrich said it would have been related to busing issues in her district. Students within a two-mile radius of schools are not now provided busing unless they pay to ride. "I would

like to fix that, or give the school district some flexibility that they can provide more busing," she said.

Her goal during the next two years is "equitable, adequate, long-term, stable, school funding." Dittrich emphasized that schools spend a lot of time and money on responding to the Legislature, resources that could better be spent elsewhere.

One accomplishment while she served on the school board was the development of a five-year financial plan.

"The amount of flexibility that supplied our board and our staff...you can really focus then on change, improvements, climate, student safety...and concentrate on that instead of always responding to the funding levels and the Legislature."

Intimate with the topic of education with three boys in public schools, Dittrich said her first "wake up call" was when her oldest, Neal, went to kindergarten and was surprised by large class sizes.

DISTRICT 47A

2002 Population: 36,895
 Largest city: Coon Rapids
 Counties: Anoka, Hennepin
 Top Concern: Quality education

Dittrich's goal during the next two years is "equitable, adequate, long-term, stable, school funding."

Even with excellent teachers, she said, there was a lack of communication and problems with how the money was flowing.

Dittrich became involved in a parent legislative team that started her on the path of being an advocate for education-related issues. The group studied education finance and took seminars on how to work with legislators.

The group was successful in seeing a one-time funding bill for the school district pass through the Legislature. That was the first time in 10 years the district didn't have to cut services to children, she said.

"Change can happen, but it's not always easy, and it takes a long time," she said. "And it takes perseverance and team work."