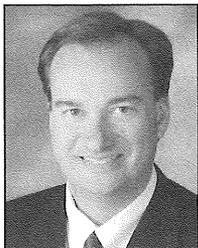


Taking on the issues

Hansen's background perfect for diverse constituency

By **LEE ANN SCHUTZ**

The day before the legislative session was to begin, Rep. Rick Hansen (DFL-South St. Paul) sat at his desk, studying last year's bonding bill. If he could have introduced the first bill of the session, that would have been it, he said. "It is unfinished business, and at least to the people I represent, it is important."



Rep. Rick Hansen

But when it comes to concerns in his district, the bonding bill is outranked by concerns over affordable health care and maintaining a quality public education system. This shouldn't come as too much of a surprise, Hansen said. For his district, that includes Lilydale, Mendota, Mendota Heights, West St. Paul and parts of Eagan, and South St. Paul,

is diverse in economics, ethnicity and age.

The district has a large number of seniors, with whom the cost of health care is an immediate concern. But there is an equally large number of what he calls the "sandwich generation" — adult children taking care of their children and elderly parents.

Hansen knows all about these struggles. He is a new father and recently had to deal with making decisions about nursing homes and assisted care facilities for his own parents. He has introduced legislation asking for a study on how public and private institutions and workplaces are dealing with the issue.

From his farming roots in rural Freeborn County and his work with the Department of Agriculture, to his new ventures in e-commerce selling Amish-made furniture, Hansen believes he is well suited to represent his constituency. He was drawn to the idea of running for the House because of his dedication to

DISTRICT 39A

2002 population: 36,532
Largest city: Eagan
County: Dakota
Top concerns: Affordable health care, quality education

Hansen has introduced legislation asking for a study on how public and private institutions and workplaces are dealing with issues faced by the "sandwich generation."

public service and feels honored to have been elected.

On the day that Hansen was sworn in, he resigned from a job at the Department of Agriculture where he worked for 17 years on pesticide issues. Hansen could have retained his position, but felt that ethically he could not vote on legislation that affected the department. "But I won't forget my work in public service, and I bring that to the table," he said.

Natural progression

A culmination of experience led Loeffler to the House

By **BRETT MARTIN**

Rep. Diane Loeffler (DFL-Mpls) has spent a good part of her career working with budgets, and in one instance, it had a very interesting outcome.



Rep. Diane Loeffler

Several years ago, when the Minnesota Board of Environmental Education was facing budget woes, it held an auction to raise money. Loeffler bid, sight unseen, on help to perform some home improvements. The board member who offered the service is now her husband.

"Demanding times can sometimes result in creative solutions," she said of the auction.

Loeffler has an eclectic background. She turned at the Department of Administration, which used to handle state budgeting. She has worked in education policy research, local government, employment, human ser-

vices and health care, focusing primarily on budgets and analyzing policy. This all served as a catalyst to run for the House seat.

"One of the things I bring to the job is experience on a wide range of issues," she said, adding that her background will be invaluable on her committees: Commerce and Financial Institutions and its Technology, Bioscience and Medical Products Division; Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs; and Rules and Legislative Administration.

Loeffler would like to see more funding in education.

"We need to increase the state investment in education — in pre-k through university education," she said. "The state has to assure that every child, no matter where he or she is born, receives a quality, publicly paid education."

If she could have introduced the first bill of the session, it would have been equal quality education for all children in the state.

"If you look at what the state is responsible for providing, education is a key responsibil-

DISTRICT 59A

2002 Population: 36,715
Largest city: Minneapolis
County: Hennepin
Top concerns: Adequately funded education, health care needs

"The state has to assure that every child, no matter where he or she is born, receives a quality, publicly paid education."

— Rep. Diane Loeffler

ity," Loeffler said. "Education is a core Minnesota value. If you have a good education, it opens up so many doors later in life."

She is also concerned with keeping a lid on property tax increases.

"There are a lot of young homeowners and elderly people on fixed incomes who are being strangled by property tax increases," she said.

Having spent part of her career in the health care field, she realizes the importance of affordable health care.

"I want to ensure quality health care is available for everyone," she said.