

PEOPLE

Fulfilling a goal

Anzelc returns to St. Paul in a different role

By MIA SIMPSON

Three hundred miles span the two farthest corners of Rep. Tom Anzelc's (DFL-Balsam Township) district, which brushes, at its top, Canada, and at its bottom, the southernmost border of Itasca County.



Rep. Tom Anzelc pursues.

His campaign vehicle, a now-battered 2006 Chevy truck bearing 50,000 miles, most clearly conveys the breadth of his election

"It's just about run down," he said.

"You don't represent a district like the one I do without having a good work ethic and without having energy."

Anzelc, pronounced AN-zels, knows the landscape of Capitol politics as deeply as his home territory. He worked in Gov. Rudy Perpich's administration as assistant

commissioner in the Department of Human Services, and later as executive director of the Gambling Control Board. He also sat on a committee asked to design a state-run welfare assistance program, which later became the Minnesota Family Investment Program.

Anzelc credits Perpich, Perpich's two brothers and another set of iconic politicians — the Kennedy brothers — for his own calling to public service.

"The Kennedys literally mesmerized me," he said. "They came from wealth, but they lifted people up."

"Contrary to the Kennedys, the Perpichs didn't come from wealth ... but there was a similarity: caring for other people and helping other people. They also became dentists, an accomplishment in itself. I marveled at that."

Anzelc's roots matched those of the Perpichs': a son of a miner on Minnesota's Iron Range. His political agenda — strong education, accessible health care, jobs and property taxes

DISTRICT 3A

2002 population: 36,745

Largest city: International Falls

Counties: Itasca, Koochiching, Lake of the Woods

Top concerns: Education, health care and property taxes.

— strongly reflects his childhood experience in a working-class family.

"My father was really a farmer/labor rights member ... he believed that the working class should run the country or, at least, that the working class needed to have political representation."

Anzelc served as a county commissioner from 1980 to 1982 before being asked by Perpich to resign and join his administration. Prior to that, he was a civics teacher in Hibbing, and a cross-country and basketball coach. He also worked as a labor union official for 12 years.

"Now, I'm starting another one of life's adventures," he said. "This is something I've wanted to do more than anything else, since high school, a long time ago."