

Planning for the future

Downey hopes to offer proactive ideas for state's future

By SONJA HEGMAN

There wasn't a specific catalyst that motivated Rep. Keith Downey (R-Edina) to run for office. "Mine was a much more gradual process," he said. But his concern over how the state is preparing itself for the future was the motivator that got him thinking about public service.



Rep. Keith Downey

"I looked at our state and thought very strongly that we weren't preparing ourselves for the 21st Century," he said. "What was happening globally and nationally; we weren't keeping pace. Our state is modeled after '60s, '70s and '80s programs and I really felt that we have an opportunity here in Minnesota."

Downey worked for an accounting and consulting firm, where he consulted with state and local government personnel for eight years before running for office. He is not working there during session, and is unsure about his future at the firm.

Downey won party endorsement over the nine-term incumbent, Ron Erhardt, who chose to run as an Independent. Downey beat Erhardt by 4.79 percent and his DFL opponent by 5.34 percent, on Election Day.

The main issues Downey sees for his district are: "The economy and how do we recover," he said. "Education really is probably the most important, absent of current economic conditions. Then it would be transportation and how we improve our infrastructure."

He said Edina residents, in general, do not

DISTRICT 41A

Population: (2007 est.) 37,407
Largest City: Edina
County: Hennepin
Top Concerns: Education, transportation, economy

mind paying higher taxes provided they are getting a good return for their investment. He hopes his appointment to the House Taxes Committee will serve his district well.

Although he comes from a business and tax background, he said he has a lot to learn especially "in terms of broader policy dimensions and the direction we should be going."

Downey also serves on three education committees and state government finance. "I think they fit me, they fit my district and they interestingly are at the very center of things considering the budgetary issues we face."