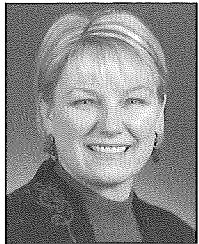


Doing greater good

Jackson views public service as a calling

By Nick Busse

With the state facing a historic budget crisis, some people seem to wonder whether Rep. Gail Kulick Jackson (DFL-Milaca) got more than she bargained for when she ran for office.



Rep. Gail Kulick Jackson

Far from being disappointed, however, the lawyer and mother of three says she's happy to be in St. Paul during such difficult times. What's more, she says she came to the Capitol with a mission: to keep a human face on the tough decisions that lie ahead.

"People will practically offer their condolences," Jackson says, "like, 'Oh, boy, I know you wanted this, but ...'"

Far from being disappointed, however, the lawyer and mother

"This is not about just doing math," she says about fixing the budget deficit. "If it were, it would be really easy. We would just change the math for the state to balance the budget. But everything is going to have an impact on people."

Jackson says she understands those impacts well. Through her experience as a volunteer attorney — as well as her time on the local school board, chamber of commerce and the board of a health care nonprofit — she's gained an appreciation of what state funding, or a lack thereof, can mean to her community.

"I know a lot of the people whose lives have been held together, either temporarily or permanently, by programs that the state of Minnesota provides. And when I picture those families and those faces without that — and what could happen to them — that's the information that I better keep in front of

DISTRICT 16A

Population: (2007 est.) 43,641

Largest City: Princeton

Counties: Benton, Mille Lacs, Morrison, Sherburne

Top Concerns: Jobs, Health Care and "keeping a human face" on issues that affect Minnesotans

me when I make these decisions," she says. Jackson, who sang opera and studied classical music before pursuing a law career, hopes to address issues unique to rural Minnesota, such as a lack of jobs with health benefits and a struggling rural health care industry. She says she's done what she can on the local level, but hopes to leverage more resources as a state lawmaker.

"There's only so much you can do with very limited small-town resources — and yet I see this gigantic need. ... You realize that, boy, there are bigger things to be done."