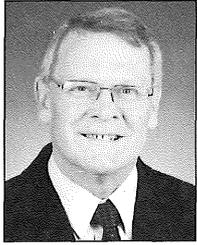


Rural Republican's challenge

Hancock says government's role important in supporting small communities

By **LEE ANN SCHUTZ**

Here's the dilemma for Rep. David Hancock (R-Bemidji). He's all for putting the brakes on government expansion; but he



Rep. David Hancock

recognizes that without these jobs, many small towns in his district would wither away.

"That's the challenge for any outstate Republican," he said. Greater Minnesota's economic health, in many ways, is based on

the services that government provides — certainly the education, health care community and the government offices, he said.

As a legislator, he wants to work toward preserving the rural way of life.

"We still have relatively vibrant small towns, cities. I am a limited government person, and we need to streamline our

delivery systems. With that said, we still need good government providing infrastructure and systems so that the private sector can thrive. It's all about balance," he said.

He and his wife, Pat, have lived in Beltrami County for more than 30 years. Now retired, he owned a tire business in Bemidji for most of that time. They have two sons and five grandchildren. He credits his young granddaughter for his decision to run for office. As an alternate delegate at the Republican state convention, he explained to her that he was there "to help make Minnesota a place to live. I decided then that I'd better mean what I say."

Hancock's style is quiet and relaxed. He attributes some of that to the harmonica that he plays.

"It's relaxing. It's almost an instrument of prayer for me," he said. He appreciates it now even more because the early hectic pace of session came somewhat unexpected.

DISTRICT 2B

Population (2009 est.): 34,629

Largest City: Park Rapids

Counties: Beltrami, Clearwater, Hubbard, Pennington, Polk

Top Concerns: Employment, access to services

At 4,359 square miles, Hancock represents one of the largest geographic areas in the state. Although the district is home to several manufacturing companies, he said unemployment historically runs higher than the rest of the state, and that is a concern.

He serves on the House Environment, Energy and Natural Resources Policy and Finance, Government Operations and Elections, and the Higher Education Policy and Finance committees.