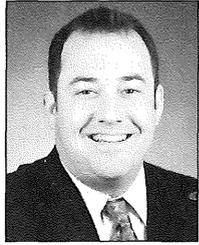


Welding the economy back together

Swedzinski brings rural development experience to the House

By SUE HEGARTY

When former House Minority Leader Marty Seifert announced he would not seek re-election, Chris Swedzinski recalls thinking, "I



Rep.
Chris Swedzinski

hope they find someone good" to fill his shoes at the Capitol. With no heir apparent coming forward, Swedzinski (R-Ghent) awoke one morning and told his wife, Jessica, that he felt called to run for the seat. Swedzinski (the "d" is silent) is no stranger to politics or government. After taking welding classes at Ridgewater College in Willmar, he earned degrees in history and political science from Minnesota State University, Mankato. During his senior year, he campaigned for former U.S. Rep. Mark Kennedy. He then worked as a

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rural development specialist for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, where his focus included renewable energy. After the federal return to Democratic power, he moved back to the family farm and started his own company, Swede Steel Works.

He honed his interest in politics as he watched his father, Tom, design and build his own farm implements. The two would listen to talk radio in the welding shed and talk about issues during long trips to buy or sell livestock.

As part of the majority party, he wants to contribute to rebuilding the economy, but said that since the decline didn't happen overnight, people shouldn't expect immediate change.

"We've gotten so far out of a free-market system that it's just going to take some time to get people back to work, and get people hiring," he said.

States have come to rely too heavily on

DISTRICT 21A

Population (2009 est.): 35,665

Largest City: Marshall

Counties: Lyon, Redwood

Top Concern: Balancing the budget

federal dollars that are tied to mandates that may not be in Minnesota's best interest or may hinder innovative reform, he said. He'd like to see states set their own destinies and develop models that can be emulated on a national scale.

As a rural legislator from an agricultural district, he's eager to serve on the House Agriculture and Rural Development Policy and Finance Committee. He also serves on the House Jobs and Economic Development Finance Committee and the House Capital Investment Committee.