

# Nornes considers legislative post a 'rare privilege'

Rep. Bud Nornes (R-Fergus Falls) has gone from broadcasting Minnesota Twins games over his own radio station to debating whether the team deserves a new outdoor stadium.



Rep. Bud Nornes

Now out of the broadcasting business, in which he spent 35 years, Nornes said his tenure as a school board member influenced him to run for the Legislature.

"I believe you always have to have goals . . .

and this seemed like a possibility," he said.

At times, though, the possibility must have seemed distant at best to the former KJJK-AM owner and station manager. Nornes ran for the District 10A seat twice before. In 1992, he lost by fewer than 700 votes, and in 1994, he fell short by a mere 73 votes.

The decision to try again did not come easily.

To become a three-time loser could be embarrassing, he said. Yet, Nornes was not embarrassed. In fact, he won by a substantial margin in a district where nearly an equal number of Republicans and Democrats live.

"I don't regret it," he said. "To have a goal, work hard, and achieve it, well, that's the only way I'd have it."

Now that he's here, Nornes said his goal is to effectively represent the people of his district.

"I came into this job without any axes to grind," he said, "or any agenda, other than to represent my district."

And the people in his district, he said, pulling out a survey he recently sent to his constituents, are concerned with welfare reform and education. In fact, he continued, the survey showed that 96 percent of the 1,500 or so respondents support the notion of requiring able-bodied people to work.

The calls he receives reflect the same sentiment, he said, although lately, he's been getting a lot of calls from people expressing their opinion on the proposed publicly financed stadium for the Minnesota Twins. For the most part, they're against it, he said.

"Some of them want to keep the Twins," Nornes said, adding that the role of government is to guide the process and find the proper funding mechanism — which, according to the people in his district, is one that doesn't include any public dollars.

From all he had heard about life at the Capitol, Nornes said, he expected to spend most of his first term just learning the ropes of the legislative process.

"Once you're elected," he said, "you hear

you'll be ineffective in your first term. I really didn't find that to be the case."

In fact, he said, legislating runs in his family. His great-grandfather represented Albert Lea in 1903. Recently, in between committee hearings and floor sessions, he spent some time in the Capitol, looking at the portraits of the former governors. Eventually, he said, he found the governor of his great-grandfather's era.

"It was interesting to learn the issues of that day," he said, adding that he hopes to spend more than a single term working on the issues of his day. "Fewer than a thousand people have served here, and I have the opportunity to put in a few years . . . it's a rare privilege that very few people get."

— F.J. Gallagher

## District 10A

**1996 population:** 33,047

**Largest city:** Fergus Falls

**Counties:** Douglas, Otter Tail

**Location:** northwestern Minnesota

**Top concern:** "To honestly do the best job that I can."

— Rep. Bud Nornes

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