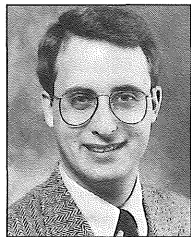


Army veteran Bergson to combat status quo

The blur of the campaign season has given way to the realities of public service for Rep. Brian Bergson (DFL-Osseo).



Rep. Brian Bergson

"It really hadn't set in until I got into my office. You know, here I am. The responsibility is starting to hit me."

Bergson comes from a politically active and service-oriented family that settled in Duluth. "Growing up, my heroes were politicians," he explained.

He takes inspiration from his ancestors and brother, who is the current mayor of Superior, Wis. And a century ago, a relative of Bergson's served in the state Legislature after fighting in the Civil War.

Bergson himself served 10 years in the U.S. Army Reserves and also worked at the state Department of Veterans Affairs until 1990. In August of that year, Bergson volunteered to go to the Persian Gulf, although the war was over by the time his training was complete.

Bergson entered the District 48A race because of philosophical differences with another DFL aspirant. Winning the hotly contested party en-

dorsement and the later primary, Bergson expected to run against nine-term incumbent Rep. Bill Schreiber (IR-Brooklyn Park). But Schreiber opted to run for the Hennepin County Board, and Bergson bested another challenger to represent the traditionally conservative district. At age 28, he is the House DFL Caucus' youngest member.

Bergson describes his district as economically diverse with a large portion of young families. He said the area suffers from a low commercial tax base, especially in Champlin, and he would like to help draw businesses into the area.

But perhaps the most pervasive characteristic of Bergson's district is voter anger. Repeating a mantra heard often during this past election cycle, Bergson said, "People are sick and tired of business as usual" in government and that "they're ticked off about paying taxes."

Bergson feels that the prevailing mood against the status quo in American government helped him get elected. He added that the high rate of turnover — there are 34 first-termers — is a sign that democracy works and that term limits aren't needed. Still, other reform ideas that promote "government responsiveness" and "inclusion" are important to Bergson and his constituency.

The issues voters seemed most angered and

frustrated by are those that Bergson plans to stress during the upcoming session. These include "crime against women and families," property taxes, and traffic congestion on highways 169 and 610, the two most frequently traveled routes going south to Minneapolis and St. Paul from northern Hennepin county. "[Highway] 169 is two lanes wide in my district and it's just packed," Bergson said.

But his plans require something of which the state is in short supply: money. It is an obstacle he knows that youth, excitement, and commitment to public service cannot, by themselves, overcome.

—Adam Samaha

District 48A

Population: 33,322
Distribution: 100 percent urban
County: Hennepin
Largest city: Brooklyn Park (portion)
Location: northern Metro
1992 presidential election results:
Bush/Quayle: 32.7 percent
Clinton/Gore: 39.1 percent
Perot/Stockdale: 27.7 percent
Other: 0.5 percent