

# Bettermann 'always wanted to be involved'

It may seem trivial today, but Rep. Hilda Bettermann (IR-Brandon) says an incident from her high school days helps illustrate the role she has played in her community.

When administrators at her high school canceled a homecoming activity, Bettermann gathered signatures on a petition to have it reinstated.

She was ultimately unsuccessful, but she says she always tries — even when the causes seem hopeless — to do what she can to bring about needed change.

"I've always wanted to be involved," she says. She's been active in a variety of local organizations. At different times, she has served as the chair, secretary, and finance director for the Douglas County Independent-Republican Party.

But she hasn't always been a Republican. Bettermann says she was a DFLer until the late 1960s, when she became disenchanted with the late Hubert Humphrey's presidential candidacy.

Although being an elected official was never at the top of her list of priorities, she says she has always wanted to be a part of government. So it's not surprising that she made the transition from Girls State in high school to the Minnesota



## Hilda Bettermann

District 11B

Home: Brandon

Occupation: Legal secretary instructor, Alexandria Technical College

District traits: 11B includes Grant County and portions of Douglas and Stevens counties, areas dominated by farming and tourism. The district favored the Bush-Quayle ticket by a 55.1-percent-to-44.9-percent margin over Dukakis-Bentsen in 1988.

House now.

In addition to being active in politics, Bettermann has another skill that will no doubt prove useful at the Capitol. She has worked as a legal secretary instructor at the Alexandria Technical College for the past nine years, and has also worked as a legal secretary for 16 years.

So making sense of the legalese should be a bit easier for her.

Hailing from a town with a population of about 400 just northwest of Alexandria, Bettermann says farming is a major issue to her constituents.

But tourism is also important, for her district lies on the edge of where the lake country meets the southeastern tip of the

vast, flat farms of the Red River Valley.

Yet despite the predominantly rural flavor of her district, Alexandria — its population center — is becoming the commercial hub of the region.

There is a 3M plant in Alexandria. There's also a Kmart and a Wal-Mart is being built, she says.

She adds that she hopes to spur economic development in rural Minnesota by enticing industry to locate outstate. But perhaps one of the greatest concerns in outstate Minnesota is health care.

"We're losing doctors there and we aren't attracting any replacements," she says.

## Drawing the line

When drawing new legislative boundaries, lawmakers have a long list of things they need to avoid.

*Packing* is definitely in violation of the law, as is *fracturing*. *Gerrymandering* could send a plan all the way to the Minnesota Supreme Court, where judges would examine *ideal populations* as well as the *overall range* of the legislative proposal.

Confused? You aren't alone.

These and a host of other terms and acronyms were introduced to lawmakers and staff of the Redistricting Committee at a Jan. 29 orientation at the historic James J. Hill House in St. Paul. This "boundary language" needs to be understood to even begin the lengthy and arduous task of shaping the new legislative districts.

That will probably take at least a little more time.

"Hopefully, we'll leave here today with an equal operating base of knowledge," says Rep. Jerry Knickerbocker (IR-Minnetonka), vice chair of the Redistricting Committee.

That base includes not only a mastery of the legislative proceedings, but a host of judicial jargon as well.

Lawmakers listened to members of both House Research and Senate Counsel outline the judicial history of cases filed on the redistricting issue.

The final redistricting plan passed by the Minnesota Legislature will need to survive any legal challenge, or it will be declared invalid. Should this occur, and if time constraints prohibit the Legislature from redesigning the plan, the courts will draw up the new districts — just as they have drawn the last three redistricting plans in Minnesota.

And for those wondering what those odd-sounding terms really mean, here's a brief explanation:

- **packing:** creating legislative districts that concentrate minority party members, packing them into as few districts as possible.

- **fracturing:** breaking up the minority party voting population, spreading them among as many districts as possible.

- **gerrymandering:** intentionally drawing boundaries of odd shapes to create an unfair partisan advantage.

- **ideal population:** the total state population divided by the number of current legislative districts. About 32,500 people will compose each House district in 1992.

- **overall range:** the difference in population between the largest and smallest legislative districts.