

Service important to former Peace Corps worker

Stepping into a new environment and working for the common good is a specialty for Rep. Larry Bodahl (DFL-Waconia).

"I think we should all give back as much as we can in service," says the former Peace Corps volunteer and ex-mayor of Waconia.

Bodahl started his career in public service in Jamaica with his wife, Jane, where they served a two-year stint with the Peace Corps. He also worked as a city planner in Oregon before returning to their native Minnesota.

Bodahl then spent 14 years working in local government starting with a city planning job in Victoria, Minn.

"But a week later the administrator left and I filled in the position," recalls Bodahl. "So I spent the next 12 years as city administrator before I was elected mayor of Waconia in 1987."

When a constituent asked the then-mayor if he had ever considered running for state office, Bodahl says he "seized the moment."

The opportunity to step into state government, says Bodahl, just seemed right.

District 35B voters agreed and turned out seven-term member K.J. McDonald, a colorful Independent-Republican known for his oratory.

Now, Bodahl is drawing on his experience in local government to help benefit his diverse constituency on the state level.

With a district that runs the gamut from high-income, white-collar professionals to rural family farmers, good representation requires a thoughtful approach, says Bodahl.

"I'm looking to my background to be able to be empathetic to all sides. My agenda is not point-specific, special-interest," he says. "I'm not here to dismantle, I'm here to improve."

Formulating a long-term energy policy for Minnesota is one area where Bodahl hopes to contribute as a member of the Energy Committee.

"That's a sign of the times," he says. "In the '70s we had very strong energy policies that we let slide in the '80s. It's being revisited."



Larry Bodahl

District 35B

Age: 43

Home: Waconia

Occupation: Strategic planning consultant

District traits: Contains parts of Scott and Carver counties to the south and west of Minneapolis. The district is both agricultural and suburban, taking in the town of Norwood and the southwestern tip of Lake Minnetonka.