## Dehler looks to 'plain common sense' for guidance

Rep. Steve Dehler (IR-St. Joseph) said he's through with "dinosaurs."

From running a "Mom and Pop" grocery



Rep. Steve Dehler society's backwaters.

store on a central Minnesota main street to duty years ago as a "printer's devil" - sweeping up after the pressmen operating hot-lead linotype machines — the first-term House member has worked his share of vocations now sliding into

Dinosaurs, he calls them. Even a recent stint as a jailer at the Morrison County jail has its ties to history. While members of the sheriff's department were being trained to work in a new facility, Dehler and a colleague worked in the old county jail during its final six months in use.

"The experience was invaluable," he said. "There are not very many installations like it that exist anymore. The place had bars — most jails don't have bars any more. It smelled. The steam didn't work. All of the tables were made out of steel. It was safe. And secure. But it was a dinosaur, something that's almost extinct."

But life in the state Legislature is a step in

another direction. "I didn't take this state office job to be inside the belly of another dinosaur," Dehler said. "I like to think state government is still in its embryonic stage, that it is still developing."

The 42-year-old Independent-Republican intends to build on knowledge honed during his 16 years on the St. Joseph City Council and two years as the city's mayor to help him adjust to his new duties. One set of developed skills is having time and an ear for questions and complaints from constituents. But equally important, he said, was learning that no one has the monopoly on innovation.

"One thing I learned on the city council was to be open to new ideas," he said. "If a better way to get something accomplished came up during discussions, so much the better. Let's do it that way and get it done."

Dehler said he also has seen how state government officials can hamstring their colleagues at the local level.

"The state tries to force a lot of things on the cities but often doesn't provide them with the money to do them," Dehler said. "If the state is desirous of cities and towns to do these many things, then they should also fund them. If they don't have the funding, then they shouldn't require them."

With an eye toward the evolving nature of the Legislature, Dehler said he arrived at the state Capitol with few preconceptions and a small agenda. He said his votes this session will reflect the concerns of his constituents — people, he said, who first care about their families, their schools, churches, and community.

Dehler also said he won't be afraid to rely on plain old common sense when making decisions. That's one dinosaur from times gone by, he said, that can't be allowed to fade away.

## **District 14A**

Population: 33 031

Distribution: 72.4 percent of residents live in rural

areas, 28.4 percent in urban areas. Counties: Benton, Morrison, Stearns

Largest city: Sartell

Location: central Minnesota 1992 presidential election results:

Bush/Quayle: 38.1 percent

Clinton/Gore: 34.8 percent Perot/Stockdale: 26 percent

Other: 1.1 percent

## Kelley to focus on improved governmental services

Rep. Steve Kelley (DFL-Hopkins) shares the same sweeping complaint about government that many voters expressed in 1992.



Rep. Steve Kelley

"There are things that the government could be doing a better job of for citizens — providing services to help make life better for individuals and families," he said.

Kelley said he found the Capitol an inviting place to help solve these prob-

lems: fitting for someone who has "always had an interest in public affairs" and who is educated in the law and public policy.

He began his legal career in 1979 after graduating from Columbia Law School, and his political start came a year later when he served on the DFL State Central Committee. In 1984, he made an unsuccessful bid for the House against former Rep. Sally Olsen (IR-St. Louis Park). When Rep. Olsen resigned to become a judge on the Workers' Compensation Court of Appeals, he tried again.

"I think I was better at campaigning the second time," he said.

Kelley's west-suburban district includes all of Hopkins and portions of St. Louis Park and Minnetonka. More than 50 percent of the area's residents live in apartments, Kelley said, adding that the district is home to both the poor and the

While campaigning, Kelley "mostly heard about the importance of education and concern about the property tax system" — two issues that are very much linked in the minds of his constituents, he said.

"Hopkins and St. Louis Park have traditionally had good schools and there are a lot of people who moved there for the quality of the schools," he said. "They're willing to pay some levels of property tax, but they're concerned about the fairness of the system."

Voters in the district wonder to what extent their taxes are subsidizing other areas. This session, Kelley intends to focus on intergovernmental relations to improve government services in the state.

"I'd like to see the Legislature create some incentives for greater cooperation and collaboration among different groups in government providing services to people so that we're more effective . . . while holding down the cost of government."

While Kelley conceded that his first few days in office have been relatively easy, he said he is looking forward to the hard part: "decisions about how to allocate resources to people."

More optimistic than some, Kelley said he expects the Legislature will proceed with "a lot less acrimony than people expect."

Most legislators "realize that citizens are still looking for their representatives to be pragmatic and not excessively political," he said.

And that, he said, is what he intends to deliver.

- Adam Samaha

## District 44A

Population: 32.773

Distribution: wholly urban; all residents live within a

Counties: Hennepin

Largest city: Hopkins (wholly contained within the district). Also contains a portion of Minnetonka.

Location: west Metro

1992 presidential election results:

Clinton/Gore: 48.2 percent Bush/Quayle: 29.9 percent Perot/Stockdale: 21.2 percent

Other: 0.7 percent