

Members leave House for new experiences

Editor's Note: As the 1992 session draws to a close, several members have chosen to leave the Minnesota House of Representatives to follow different career paths. Each lawmaker has fond memories of his or her time spent in the House, but all feel that this is the right time for change. Several will be running for the state Senate or Congress; one will become a district court judge. Others will be encouraging reform from outside the government structure, and a few will be exploring new avenues — one step at a time.



Terry Dempsey

Leaving the Legislature after nearly 14 years to become a district court judge is going to require some adjustments — almost all of them good, said Rep. Terry Dempsey (IR-New Ulm).

He acknowledges he'll miss many of the acquaintances and the working relationships he's developed during his tenure in the Minnesota House, the last two years as minority leader. But one thing he won't miss, he said, will be the hours.

"It's back to an 8-to-5 job," Dempsey said of his new position as district court judge in Mankato and St. James. "It means I'll be going home for dinner and not living in a hotel in St. Paul four or

five nights a week. No more of the 'truck driver' syndrome, living between two places.

"I hope my wife [Janet] can handle the culture shock of having me around all the time."

Dempsey was appointed to the post March 13 by Gov. Arne Carlson. He said his tentative plan is to take over the Fifth District judgeship, which covers 14 counties in the southwestern portion of the state, about two weeks after the Legislature adjourns.

The desire to be a judge hasn't been something he's carried since he graduated from the University of California Law School in 1963. Instead, he said, it's been more of a natural progression since becoming active in politics.

Still, there will be some changes. As a legislator, Dempsey said he was "free to input my own individual philosophies into what I did. As a judge at the trial level, I'm going to be constrained somewhat in what I'm going to do by the law."

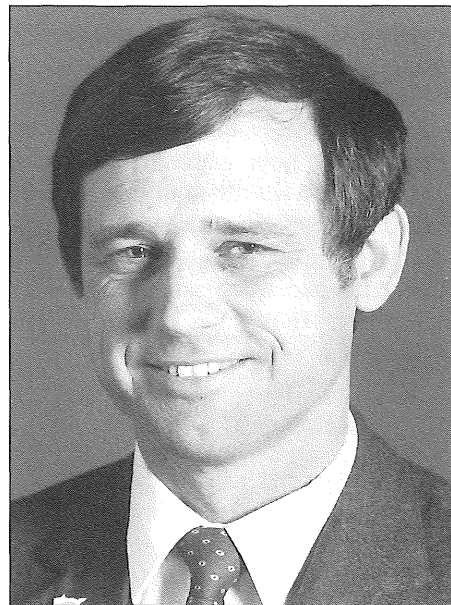
Although Dempsey belongs to the-government-that-governs-least-governs-best school of thought at the Legislature, he said he won't let his personal biases color his court opinions. In other words, don't expect Dempsey to start wielding a heavy gavel.

"That sort of action is more appropriate for an appellate court," he said. "You can kind of say that the supreme court designs the car, while the trial court does the repairs."

He said he's looking forward to hearing the wide range of cases — criminal, civil, probate, juvenile, and conciliation court — that will come before him. And while some may consider some of those areas mundane, Dempsey said it's important to remember that every case is important to the people involved.

"For most people, they're only in a court room once or twice during their lives," Dempsey said. "So to them, it's the biggest case ever heard."

—Dave Price



Steve Dille

Dassel legislator Steve Dille is a busy man — he works as a legislator, veterinarian, and farm manager.

After six years, Dille is leaving the House to run for the Senate seat being vacated by Sen. John Bernhagen (IR-Hutchinson). Dille said he is approaching the change with enthusiasm, but does so with a sense of loss.

The Senate appeals to Dille, he said, because it's a "body on average much more conservative than the House" and because the "level of partisan politics is less." He is also looking forward to the longer terms in the Senate.

Although Dille said he has been frustrated with the "level of partisan bickering in the House," he added that things have improved this year. He credits current Majority Leader Alan Welle and Minority Leader Terry Dempsey with the improvement.

As a manager of a 700-acre crop and livestock farm in Meeker County, and as a veterinarian, Dille literally has a hands-on feel for many of the issues that affect rural Minnesotans.

And not surprisingly, he has authored many bills that affect his work, ranging from a measure he helped pass that has been hailed as a model for veterinary drug safety and others that helped eradicate animal disease.

Dille is also proud of his work on farm