

# A well-worn path

## Dibble plans to leave the House and pursue an open Senate seat, the same move his predecessor made in 2000

By LISA HILTON

After one term in the House, Rep. D. Scott Dibble (DFL-Mpls) hopes to continue serving, but this time in a different chamber.

Dibble, 36, recently received his party's endorsement and will run for the District 60 senate seat that will open when Sen. Myron Orfield (DFL-Mpls) steps down.

The idea of running for Senate is not new to the first-term legislator. When Sen. Allan Spear (DFL-Mpls) left the Senate in 2000, he encouraged Dibble to run. But when then-Rep. Orfield sought the seat, Dibble instead set his sights on the vacant House seat.

The political scene was nothing new to the freshman representative. Having worked for six years as an aide for Minneapolis City Council Member Dore Mead, and holding positions with several community groups, Dibble was accustomed to fighting for issues at the Capitol.

Seeing things from the other side has been an interesting and rewarding experience. Dibble said dealing with budget issues and the special session last year exposed him to the more colorful side of the Legislature.

"Some of my senior colleagues have told me I've seen quite a bit for a first-termer," he said.

Dibble admits that it was sometimes frustrating to be a member of the minority and not have bills heard, adding the Senate may provide new opportunities if a DFL majority remains after elections this fall.

He expects the more formal Senate to be somewhat different from the House.

"My perception of the Senate is that it's a little less taken with partisanship," he said. "I do think it will be a little more serious and maybe a little less fun. Things can get pretty interesting on the floor of the House."

A self-proclaimed "Air Force brat," Dibble was born in New York City and grew up in places such as Italy, Portugal, Bermuda, Texas, and Alabama, before moving to Minnesota when he was in middle school.

He attended Apple Valley High School,



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHEID

**Rep. Scott Dibble is leaving the House after one term to pursue a Senate seat, being vacated by Sen. Myron Orfield, Dibble's House predecessor.**

where he was a classmate of Rep. Chris Gerlach (R-Apple Valley), and later studied German and political science at the universities of Minnesota and St. Thomas.

Dibble said he enjoys knowing that those he represents are closely watching what he does. He said that he receives the highest number of contacts from constituents in the DFL caucus, and responds to each call personally.

"It's just a sign of how engaged the people in my district are," he said.

He is also proud of Minnesota's open Legislature, he said.

"It's very much an activist Legislature and very much an accessible Legislature," he said. "I think that's great. A lot of people over here aren't getting paid. It's not just hired-gun lobbyists."

Among the issues Dibble has fought for include affordable housing, transportation, airport noise reduction, and gay and lesbian issues.

Serving on the Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs, Ways and Means, and Transportation Policy committees, Dibble has supported plans to remove transit operation expenses from metropolitan property taxes, and he put a lot of work into an affordable housing bill during his first year in office.

Dibble, one of two openly gay House members, is also an outspoken critic of the House decision not to extend medical benefits to state employees' gay and lesbian partners.

Rep. Karen Clark (DFL-Mpls) who has worked with Dibble on a number of bills, said he has been a joy to work with.

"He is equally passionate about economic and social justice to rely on," she said. "I will miss him personally and as a very smart and strategic colleague."

Clark, who is a lesbian, said she has also enjoyed having a gay member to share feelings and ideas with.


"It's nice to have someone who shares the same values, concerns, and life experiences," she said.

Rep. Harry Mares (R-White Bear Lake), the sponsor of the Twins stadium bill, said he worked with Dibble on a number of bills, and fielded "some good, challenging questions" from him regarding the ballpark proposal.

"I've always found him to be very reasonable and very fair," he said. "He's a strong believer in his position."

If he wins the Senate seat, Dibble says he will stay in office as long as he is effective in getting things done for his constituents, but added, "I don't expect to be there forever."

Dibble said he would encourage his replacement to develop good relationships among colleagues and stay connected to the community.

"I believe strongly that public service is an honor, and an extremely rare honor." 

## STEPPING DOWN

**Rep. D. Scott Dibble**  
**DFL**

**District 60B — Minneapolis**

**Terms: 1**

**Career notes:** Dibble has fought for affordable housing, airport noise reduction, transportation, and gay and lesbian issues during his one term in the House.