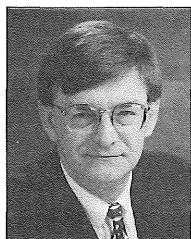# Hackbarth returns to familiar environment, issues

By Sarah Hallonquist

Before running for office a fourth time, Rep. Tom Hackbarth (R-Cedar) made a few deals with his wife, Mary.

"My wife and I had some real heart-to-heart discussions," he said.

Worried that campaigning would take time away from his family (as it had in the past), Hackbarth dedicated certain days of the week for his family of five to spend together. In between door-knocking during the day and selling auto parts four nights a week, Hackbarth was able to squeeze in some hours of normalcy with his wife and children.

Rep. Tom Hackbarth

"Campaigning is the hardest part of being an elected official," he said.

But it seems to have paid off for Hackbarth, who won back the District 50A seat he had lost in 1996 to DFLer Kathleen Sekhon. It was the third switch for the two legislators — Sekhon held the seat in 1993-94 before Hackbarth won his first term in 1994, only to relinquish the post to Sekhon in a tight 1996 election.

"My district is becoming more and more conservative all the time," Hackbarth said, pointing out that young families with children are rapidly moving into the area. And he maintains that his attention to outdoors issues hits home with his constituents.

During his previous term, Hackbarth's most notable legislation was the "turkey stamp"

law. Prompted by calls from concerned hunters who saw the state's turkey population declining, the law set up a tax on turkey hunting licenses. Hunters now pay an extra $5 for hunting wild turkeys. Ninety percent of that revenue goes to researching and preserving the habitat of wild turkeys.

Because he is also a hunter, Hackbarth said he was hesitant at first to tack on an additional fee for the turkey stamp. But other hunters' support for the plan reassured him it was the right thing to do.

He also sponsored legislation that secured prizes for fishing contest winners. The 1995 law requires contest promoters to prove they can provide the financial prize packages they promise.

This session, Hackbarth plans to focus again on outdoor sports issues. The ban on snowmobile studs passed in 1998, upset a lot of voters in his district, he said. So he introduced a bill (**HF6**) that calls for a repeal of some of those restrictions. That bill passed on the House floor Jan. 21.

He said he also strongly favors abolishing automobile emissions test requirements this session. The issue has come up in past sessions, including Hackbarth's first term, and he supported repealing the requirements then, too.

"We just don't have this problem like we did before," he said. "It's an unnecessary regulation that we don't need."

His other goals this session include staying in touch with his constituents. He plans to hold a series of town meetings in his district

called "Eggs and Issues." During his last term, he hosted the meetings, which took place at a local restaurant in the morning.

"Oh, we packed the place," he said. "They loved it."

Hackbarth was born in Minneapolis and grew up in Brooklyn Park. He graduated from Anoka High School and attended North Hennepin Community College while working in the auto parts business. He originally intended to be a teacher, but then took some business classes as his interests changed.

After three years of school, Hackbarth went to work full time in the auto parts business. Since 1972, he has been selling auto parts at Brookdale Ford in Brooklyn Center. He has also owned and operated a grain salvage company and Modular Homes Midwest, a manufactured-home business.

He now lives in Cedar, which is north of Anoka, on property that was once part of his grandfather's farm. In between work, lawmaking, hunting, and fishing, Hackbarth still has enough time to be a volunteer firefighter, a pursuit that brings a smile to his face at its mention.

District 50A

1995 population: 37,063
Largest City: Ham Lake
County: Anoka
Location: northern metro
Top concern: "I think (emissions testing) is the big issue, and I think everyone in my district is behind eliminating that program."
— **Rep. Tom Hackbarth**

Minnesota could lose about $2.5 million in federal funding through Medicare and Medicaid payments, but he said that is "highly unlikely."

And some lawmakers said they'd prefer to see the bill address bed rails specifically, instead of restraints in general.

Rep. Lee Greenfield (DFL-Mpls) said he would ask the committee to amend the bill to address bed rails only, noting that they were the focus of the protest from those who testified in committee.

Bradley said he used the broader language because of the ambiguity surrounding the definition of bed rails.

The committee has taken no action yet on Bradley's bill.

About 200 pieces sit in storage because they have been rendered unusable. Repair and re-upholstering would be necessary in order for those pieces to be returned to use in the Capitol.

On Jan. 26, students in a woodworking class at Dakota County Technical College began refurbishing some of the benches around the Capitol and furniture in the Supreme Court chamber. As part of the Minnesota Historical Society's effort to conserve the state's historical sites, about 12 students buffed and polished out scratches on the well-worn pieces.

And employees of the Capitol Historic Site still keep tabs on the furniture already in use.

"We continue to work with the people who use the furniture," Kompelien said. "It does need maintenance; it's really a special collection."

Where to find information

House Public Information Office
175 State Office Building
(651) 296-2146 or 1-800-657-3550

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http://www.leg.state.mn.us