

# Freshman Hanson has veteran credentials

*Editor's note: In each issue for the next 10 weeks, Session Weekly will profile two or three of the 21 new members of the House. This is the first of those installments.*

Although he's a freshman, Rep. Jeff Hanson is no newcomer to the state Capitol.

Fifteen years ago, he was a Senate page, running errands for Sen. Roger Moe and the Natural Resources and Agriculture Committee. Today he is a DFL state lawmaker, representing District 56A in the Minnesota House.

"It was never a childhood dream to become a legislator," he says. "Just a natural next step in my commitment to public service." A graduate of both the Humphrey Institute of Public Policy and Moorhead State University, Hanson has a wide-ranging job history.

After nine years as a radio and television journalist, he returned to state politics, working three years as a legislative assistant to the Senate Finance Committee chair. He has also taught at the university level and most recently served as governmental relations coordi-



## Jeff Hanson

District 56A

Age: 32

Home: Woodbury

Occupation: County intergovernmental relations coordinator

District traits: 56A stretches from the southeastern edge of St. Paul to the Wisconsin border, and includes the city of Afton. Home construction is booming in the district.

nator for Washington County.

A resident of Woodbury since 1983, Hanson has also been active in a number of volunteer organizations and community boards.

His district is both suburban and rural, and the region is among the fastest growing areas in the state.

"Growth and development are double-edged swords," says Hanson, explaining that environmental issues — particularly groundwater contamination — will be among his top legislative concerns. "They bring opportunity, but they can also

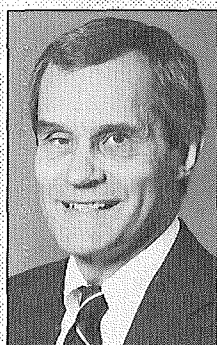
bring pain."

Crime is another topic on Hanson's agenda, adding that more attention needs to be paid to the victims of sexual assault and those who are injured by drunk drivers.

Hanson, an avid collector of political buttons when not handling constituent calls, credits former legislator L.J. Lee of Bagley for the inspiration to seek office.

"He taught me to look back from where we've come, and forward to where we're going," says Hanson. "He was a model of integrity."

# Erhardt plans to focus on business issues



## Ron Erhardt

District 42B

Age: 61

Home: Edina

Occupation: Financial planner

District traits: 42B is contained within the city of Edina, which is known for its good schools and outstanding athletic teams.

Ron Erhardt always wanted to be a state legislator. So when friend and associate Mary Forsythe chose to retire after representing the Edina area in the House for 18 years, he jumped at the chance.

A longtime IR activist, party leader, and fundraiser on both local and state levels, Erhardt welcomes the challenges state government offers.

Although he ran unopposed in the strongly Republican district, Erhardt still

made the rounds, doorknocking at more than 11,000 homes.

He describes his district as a group of achievers, "a hard-working core of business and professional people," and bristles at the common perception of Edina as a very affluent suburb.

"I must have met at least 5,000 of my constituents," he says. "To meet with any degree of success at the Capitol, I need to know their concerns."

Their priorities, he found, were largely

about education. And that only makes sense considering that 92 percent of Edina High School graduates go on to some form of higher education.

"People want to know that our commitment to education will still be there despite a budget crunch," he says.

A lifetime Minnesotan, Erhardt has worked in the financial planning field since 1961. Like many legislators, he sees improvement of the business climate as a top priority.

"We need to improve the Edina business climate," he says. "Examining the current property tax system would be a step in the right direction."

He also sees the shift to an Independent-Republican governor as a positive one for the minority party. "I think we'll have opportunities this session we haven't had in the recent past," he says.

But as a first-year legislator, he recognizes there is much to be learned and much to be done.

"I think I'll be doing a lot of listening," he says.