

Elk River DFLer offers 'Cleansing Thoughts'

As a journalist-turned-legislator, Rep. Stephanie Klinzing (DFL-Elk River) realizes she has a different attitude toward protecting the public's



Rep. Stephanie Klinzing

right to know than some of her new colleagues.

"What I turn out to be — maybe to some people's dismay — is more public than those in power may want me to be," she said. Nevertheless, she holds her tongue when she hears some of her new colleagues bashing the media.

"If they don't have an appreciation of freedom of the press, I'm not the one who's going to convince them of that."

Before she got into politics, Klinzing worked as a journalist for 20 years, the last 11 with the *Elk River Star News*. Having covered government issues for so long, "I thought I had as much knowledge as anybody," she said. So, four years ago, she decided to switch from affecting public policy by writing editorials to being a decision

maker. She ran for the Sherburne County Board and won.

After a tough nomination fight, Klinzing launched a campaign remarkable for its use of two donkey-like pets to symbolize the Democratic Party. In the interests of full disclosure, Klinzing admits the donkeys are actually mules, now meeting another household need by grazing on the 80 acres she and her family own in Elk River.

Her four years as a county commissioner made Klinzing aware that if change is going to occur, it must take place at the state level. She is especially concerned about state mandates placed on counties that are not accompanied by funding, resulting in a higher property tax burden on county residents.

Klinzing's District 19B is "property-poor," she said. Relatively few businesses and industries share the tax burden with an ever-growing number of residents who commute to the Twin Cities to work.

A clear message Klinzing got from her constituents is that they want no tax increases of any kind. Klinzing said she will do her best to abide by that wish. Among her early priorities

are reforming county ditch laws to alleviate drainage problems in new residential areas, and seeking forgiveness of a \$500,000 penalty against Sherburne County for exceeding the state levy limit.

Klinzing has the perfect avenue to keep her constituents well informed. Her observations from the Capitol will appear in her resurrected column, "Klinzing (pronounced 'Cleansing') Thoughts," in the *Elk River Star News*.

— Ruth Hammond

District 19B

Population: 32,913

Counties: Sherburne, Wright

Largest city: Elk River

Largest employer: United Power Association, 425 employees

Topography: 59.2 percent of residents living inside an incorporated city; 40.8 percent living in rural areas.

1992 presidential election results:

Bush/Quayle: 35 percent

Clinton/Gore: 34.9 percent

Perot/Stockdale: 29.3 percent

Other: 0.8 percent