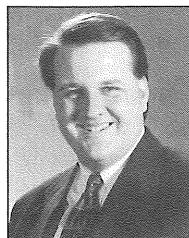


# One-time staffer returns to Capitol in new role

By Paul Wahl

For Rep. Dan Larson (DFL-Bloomington), the first few days of the legislative session brought back a flood of memories. Earlier in his career, he spent four years as a legislative assistant to former state Sen. Phil Riveness.



Rep. Dan Larson

Larson knew the lay of the land, but one important piece of the terrain had changed. During his tenure with Riveness, both the House and Senate were under DFL control. This session, Larson will be part of a DFL minority in the House.

"The approach is different," said the former Richfield High School star football player and life-long political activist. "The other party sets the agenda, and you have a different role — more of a reactive role."

Larson said the challenge for him and other DFLers is to present their own agenda and have as much impact as possible on the major issues before the House.

Larson, 33, is quickly adjusting to the difference between being a staff member and being an elected official.

"It's a huge responsibility making decisions for such a large number of people rather than just observing the process," he said. "Now there comes a time to make decisions."

Larson sees some advantages to having experience at the Capitol prior to serving in office.

"If you're involved in community, you're prepared on many of the issues," he said.

Larson's first political involvement came as a high school student, and he continued to be active as a student both at Normandale Community College and at the University of Minnesota, where he earned a bachelor's degree in history.

He has spent the past four years working in government affairs with a Minneapolis law firm.

He also sat on the Bloomington Traffic and Transportation Advisory Committee, an experience that will serve him well as a member of the House Transportation Finance and House Transportation Policy committees. This session he'll also serve on the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee.

Much of Larson's district is within earshot of Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, and he said he'll be working to assure the state is involved in mitigating the cost of redevelopment in areas impacted by airport expansion.

He's also concerned about noise at the facility, although he acknowledges that since flight paths are determined by the Federal Aviation Administration, the Legislature has limited authority in noise control.

He said a long-term solution to the issues surrounding the airport might require a regional approach — expanding airports in St. Cloud and Rochester, for instance — to help lessen the load of daily commercial flights into the Twin Cities.

Larson also said he plans to work for a fair tax reduction.

"We also need to reform the property tax system but we need to do it in a way that people feel we're really creating reform,"

Larson said. "Unfortunately, in the past either they haven't seen it or it doesn't realize long-term reform."

He supports Gov. Jesse Ventura's rebate proposal based on sales tax.

Larson chose to run when former Rep. Mark Mahon decided not to seek a fourth term in the House. Larson defeated his Republican challenger by 357 votes.

Helping guide his campaign as co-chair was Richfield resident Margaret Severe, who was Larson's third-grade teacher and lives five blocks from where he grew up. Larson said having your third-grade teacher running your campaign helps "keep your feet on the ground."

Larson's parents also live in the district he now represents. His father was elected commissioner of Minnesota Babe Ruth Baseball shortly after Larson was elected to the House in November 1998.

Larson and his wife, Sheila, have two children, 4-year-old Joe and 2-year-old Jennifer.

The family enjoys golf and bowling. Larson's parents have owned a bowling alley in Richfield for many years. This winter, Larson and his wife have been teaching their children how to ice skate.

## District 40A

**1995 Population:** 32,303

**Largest city:** Bloomington

**County:** Hennepin

**Location:** southern metro suburbs

**Top concern:** "Providing maximum educational opportunities for our youth must be our highest priority, and that will also help define our economy in the 21st century."

— Rep. Dan Larson

## Message from the House: No senators allowed

As long as the Senate doesn't invite House members into its retiring room, the House won't be asking the Senate over anytime soon.

When the House adopted its permanent rules for the session Jan. 11, it changed a long-standing tradition. In the past, senators were allowed in the House retiring room — the room behind the chamber — to visit with representatives during floor sessions.

The retiring room is used by House

members as a meeting room or place to rest during floor sessions. Because food is not allowed on the House floor, members often take food and drink breaks in the retiring room.

However, House members have historically not been allowed in the Senate's retiring room, according to the Senate rules.

During the debate on House rules, Rep. Steve Trimble (DFL-St. Paul) and Rep. Dan McElroy (R-Burnsville) offered an

amendment to bar senators from the House retiring room. Trimble said he sponsored the amendment because of fairness.

"I think it is stupid of (the Senate) to have the rule," Trimble said. "We've asked them to change it before, and they haven't. Maybe this will bring about some change."

The amendment was adopted on a 95-37 vote.