

New members . . .

# DFLer Marko a big fan of House television endeavor

A few years ago, Rep. Sharon Marko worked with the Bloomington City Council to help it broadcast council meetings on a public access cable station. One night as she sat in the production room behind the scenes she found herself talking to the screen as council members debated issues.



Rep. Sharon Marko

"I thought to myself, 'I can do this again.'" Marko, who had previously served on a local community board near St. Charles, Ill., entered politics again and became a council member in Newport where she has lived since moving to Minnesota in 1985. She later became deputy mayor.

The first-term DFL lawmaker from the Cottage Grove-Newport-St. Paul Park area, then traveled another campaign trail and journeyed into the Minnesota House.

Political debate and discussion has long been a part of Marko's life. Her father was a Democrat and her mother a Republican. "So, I heard a lot. . . . I remember Sunday news programs sitting around and listening to them go back and forth."

She was born in Kentucky and has lived in nine other states. Many of her early travels involved her family. The work of her father, a nuclear physicist and cancer researcher, took the family of 11 around the country.

Marko graduated from Indiana University in communications and then moved to Colorado. "I graduated from college and it was one of those things where I got in the car and headed west. I found a place I liked and opened an antique shop."

She later moved to St. Charles, Ill., where the civics lessons learned during childhood followed her. While there she wrote, edited and distributed a community newspaper as well as served on the small community's local

board. During her tenure on the board she helped to start a mosquito abatement program. "It was a problem. We had a lot of farm land and standing water. . . . They were just terrible."

She came to Minnesota in 1985 to enroll in a performing arts graduate program at the University of Minnesota. There Marko, who has played Mark Antony in a stage production of *Julius Caesar*, had a class with WCCO television newscaster Dave Moore who helped foster an interest in television. She used that knowledge to help local governments use public access cable television to communicate with their constituents.

After working with the city of Bloomington to televise its council meetings and host a weekly public affairs program called Bloomington Today, she started her own business and developed a government television network in south Washington County so governments in the area could watch and learn from one another.

She is a big fan of the House endeavor to televise floor sessions and some committee meetings on public access cable television. "I think it is a wonderful way to communicate to the public. I think we should do more."

Her areas of legislative interest run the gamut but they center on transportation issues and government efficiency.

"We've got a lot of congestion in my district," she said.

She wants to upgrade the I-494 Wacouta Bridge (a major river crossing) and Highway 61 to a full access freeway system. Good roads and bridges are needed in her district, she said. Without them, the district "can't entice good solid commercial/industrial business" and increase the tax base for schools, local governments, and the state. And, she said, there is a lot of vacant commercial/industrial land available and ready for development in the area.

"I think it is important to the health of the entire Metro. If there is a piece of the machine that is not working right, you replace the part."

She said a bill may not be necessary to upgrade Highway 61 and the Wacouta Bridge. Marko, who has been named vice chair of the House Transportation and Transit Committee, said she hopes to work through the Department of Transportation and convince them it is a priority.

She also plans to introduce a bill to continue the research and development of the Saints Road Project, a St. Cloud-based group that has already constructed prototype vehicles — including a full-size passenger bus — that collect power from sections of the road and become energized as vehicles pass over them. The 1994 Legislature appropriated \$200,000 for the Department of Transportation to study the road-powered electric vehicles and compare it to light rail transit systems.

Marko also wants to help promote government efficiency to get counties and cities to work together and share resources. "You can share, you can save and you can provide a better service."

—K. Darcy Hanzlik

### District 57B

<b>Population:</b>	32,034
<b>Distribution:</b>	97.25 percent urban; 2.75 percent rural
<b>County:</b>	Washington
<b>Largest city:</b>	Cottage Grove
<b>Location:</b>	southeastern Metro
<b>Unemployment rate:</b>	5.16 percent
<b>Residents living below poverty level:</b>	4.38 percent
<b>1992 presidential election results:</b>	
Bush/Quayle	25.18 percent
Clinton/Gore	47.59 percent
Perot/Stockdale	26.52 percent
Other:	0.71 percent

Some pilot programs authorized by the Legislature have yet to get off the ground.

Katherine Burke-Moore, director of the Driver and Vehicle Services Division of the Department of Public Safety, appeared before the Judiciary Finance Committee Jan. 31 to discuss the ignition interlock pilot program which has yet to materialize.

The plan was to have breathalyzers installed in the cars of repeat DWI offenders



and require them to test themselves each time they got behind the wheel. The kicker: The car wouldn't start unless the driver passed the test.

Since the Legislature authorized the program in 1991, several manufacturers have contacted the Department of Public Safety, but no prototypes have been tested.

Partially to blame may be the fact that the manufacturer would have to pay a \$5,000 certification fee before the state tested and certified the product.

The committee also heard of another DWI pilot project waiting to get started. This one would install breathalyzers in the homes of DWI offenders to monitor them. In 1994, however, Gov. Arne Carlson vetoed the Legislature's \$100,000 appropriation to fund the pilot project.