

Newinski hopes to bridge partisanship

Rep. Dennis R. Newinski (IR-Maplewood) was active in politics for nearly 20 years before he decided to run for office. His involvement, however, was with the "other" party.

A DFLer until 1988, Newinski and his wife switched to the Independent-Republican Party in 1988.

"Our personal philosophies were more in line with the Republican Party," Newinski explains.

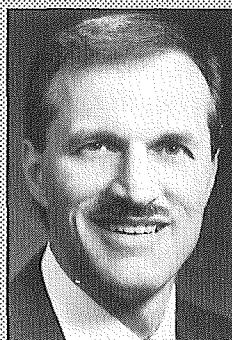
Newinski has definite ideas about the role of government. "Government has to facilitate and create an environment where people can develop to their full potential," he says. "I don't believe government should be in people's lives the way it is."

Soon after Newinski switched parties he found himself drafted as the District 54B IR candidate in 1988.

"As I was going through life, I never had ambition to be in elected office," Newinski says. He replaced the party's endorsed candidate, who had withdrawn from the race after receiving a job promotion.

With only 60 days to campaign, Newinski still ran an impressive race that year against incumbent Rep. Dick Kostohryz (DFL-North St. Paul), capturing 43 percent of the vote.

Keeping his campaign committee



Dennis R. Newinski

District 54B

Age: 47

Home: Maplewood

Occupation: Lead machinist

District traits: 54B, which includes North St. Paul and part of Maplewood, is heavily residential but includes significant commercial development. The district voted for Dukakis-Bentsen over Bush-Quayle by a 61.5-to-38.5 percent margin in 1988.

intact, Newinski mounted a new challenge in 1990 and managed to unseat the nine-term legislator by a 51.5 percent to 48.5 percent margin. Newinski credits his victory to hard work, plus the connections he has built up over the years volunteering for the Boy Scouts, the community theatre, and his church.

After touring the House following his victory, Newinski says he felt "the awesomeness" of responsibility: "I looked at it as a real honor because I really feel this is the greatest country on the earth."

His former life as a DFLer, Newinski believes, will help him work with his colleagues across the aisle.

"The barriers are broken down already," he says. "I'm not afraid to go over and talk to them."

As a 26-year employee of Northern

States Power Co., Newinski also has been involved with organized labor. He asked for, but lost, the AFL-CIO's endorsement in November's election. "As a Republican and being a member of labor, I hope I can help bridge the gap of working against each other," the lawmaker says.

In his district, Newinski says top concerns include education and taxes. "They're very fearful of funding during the shortfall," he says, referring to the predicted state budget crunch during the next biennium.

And like other representatives whose districts have experienced commercial-industrial development, Newinski isn't happy with the fiscal disparities law, which distributes tax proceeds from development-rich to development-poor communities in the Twin Cities.



Want to work for the state? You aren't alone. The Department of Employee Relations annually receives almost 120,000 job applications for classified positions, according to Deputy Commissioner Elaine Johnson. In an average year, only 2,000 of these people — about 1.6 percent — will become new state employees.

Free Parking at the Minnesota Zoological Garden is expected to draw even more visitors to the 500-acre Apple Valley site, says Kathryn Roberts, general director of the zoo. Return

visitors will also find a \$2 million coral reef exhibit in the works. Roberts told members of the Governmental Operations Committee Feb. 7 that a number of sharks and more than 2,500 tropical fish will be included in the display. The exhibit, scheduled for unveiling this May, was funded in part by private donations. The annual operating budget for the zoo is \$8.4 million, with over 25 percent of this state appropriation returned to the general fund through gate receipts.

A bill that would create a one-year window under which small businesses would be allowed to enroll in group health insurance plans didn't sit well with Rep. Gloria Segal (DFL-St. Louis Park) when it was revealed the proposal (HF208) excluded mental health services. "What this message says is: if you're

depressed, if you're manic depressive, if you're schizophrenic, you better walk in front of a car and get hit by a car because then your coverage is going to kick in," Segal told members of the Health Care Access and Delivery Subcommittee on Feb. 7. "I find it disgusting and appalling that the health insurers in today's climate still don't recognize that people [with mental illness] have a legitimate illness and that they are entitled to go to a psychiatrist."

Health professionals would be required to report wounds they suspect were caused during the commission of a crime if a bill approved Feb. 6 by the Judiciary Committee's Criminal Justice Division becomes law. The proposal (HF120) is sponsored by Rep. Mike Jaros (DFL-Duluth).