

New members . . .

Rostberg puts 'reap-what-you-sow' lessons to work

Growing up on a Kanabec County farm and attending a one-room school, Rep. Jim Rostberg (IR-Isanti) learned how common sense and careful work can bring future rewards.



Rep. Jim Rostberg

Serving his first term in the House, Rostberg is putting those you-reap-what-you-sow lessons to work on some of the tough issues facing state government.

Rostberg wants to improve education and to make sure there will be good jobs for those children later.

That way, the way Rostberg sees it, there will be less need for welfare, state-funded health care, or new prison space.

"By doing some preventive care up front, we can reduce the costs at the other end," he said.

Rostberg said a more business-friendly environment in Minnesota would help put people to work in good jobs with good benefits.

He is one of many lawmakers who is looking to make changes in workers' compensation laws this year in order to boost business and jobs.

"We need to look at our competition, our neighboring states, and see what we can do to bring ourselves into a better position," he said. "If we're not competitive with our neighbors, how can we blame businesses for moving over the border?"

Rostberg won the District 18A seat in the House in 1994 by defeating four-term in-

cumbent former Rep. Harold Lasley (DFL-Cambridge).

A 1992 race between the same two candidates was Rostberg's first run for state office.

Rostberg has worked for the past nine years as the emergency management director and veterans service officer for Isanti County — positions that have given him a close-up look at some of the problems facing people in his community.

There he worked with many low-income community members and saw their struggles for affordable housing, health care, and other essentials.

"I wanted to come down to the Legislature to do what I could do to help decrease the cost of government and to increase opportunities for people," he said.

Rostberg served six years on active duty in the Navy, three of which were spent on submarines, and he is a member of the Navy reserves. He and his wife, Kathy, have two children: Jacob, 12, and LeeAnn, 9.

During his years on the family farm, Rostberg developed a keen interest in agricultural and environmental issues.

He enjoys hands-on work such as cutting his own fire wood and heading out to do some deer hunting in the fall. And he wants to work in the Legislature to maintain Minnesota's agricultural strength and abundant natural resources.

"We need to do what we can to preserve our environment so my children and my children's children will be able to enjoy it as much as I have," Rostberg said.

Still, he believes there "needs to be a bal-

ance" between environmental protection and development.

"The best way to accomplish that is through local control," Rostberg said. "Common sense should dictate a lot of things, and I think you get common sense when local officials decide because the public is more actively involved."

He supports legislation being considered this year that would give counties more power to decide which wetlands should be protected and which can be developed.

Rostberg still owns a share of the family farm where he grew up and still works the land every year.

While he currently is busy trying to forge a better future for people in his district, Rostberg has some other seeds to sow this spring.

"The first thing I'm going to do when the session ends, if I don't have time before then, is get on my tractor, plow my field, and plant it," he said.

— Nick Healy

District 18A

Population: 32,320
Distribution: 15.76 percent urban; 84.24 percent rural
Counties: Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Pine
Largest city: Cambridge
Location: east central Minnesota
Unemployment rate: 6.72 percent
Residents living below poverty level: 8.90 percent
1992 presidential election results:
 Bush/Quayle 28.97 percent
 Clinton/Gore 39.98 percent
 Perot/Stockdale 29.72 percent
 Other: 1.33 percent

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