

positive signs that the state is strengthening its commitment to education.

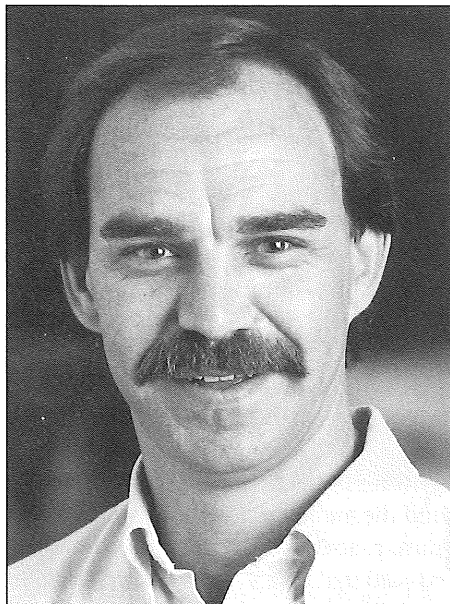
Twenty years of House service is not without its disappointments, however. Nelson said that the resistance of some teachers' unions to effective change has been a frustrating stumbling block.

"We ought to have more quality than what we have, and the resistance of some within the system itself to follow through on substantive and creative change has forced us to create alternatives," he said.

Nelson also expressed frustration with the legislative process itself, stating that "we are not always governed by quality, but too much by partisan politics."

"I remain strong with conviction that our public systems and services are not serving our citizens as well as they should be," he said, adding that he hopes he can make government more responsive by acting outside the government structure itself.

—Steve Knutson



### Paul Ogren

The conference committee was in its third day and Rep. Paul Ogren (DFL-Aitkin) was chairing a taxes meeting for possibly the last time.

Sen. Doug Johnson (DFL-Cook), who has seen many House tax chairs come and go said, "I would remind conferees that the chair is a lame duck."

The room erupted in laughter.

While the temptation for some representatives might be to relax during their final year, Ogren has remained at the forefront of some of this session's

most controversial issues.

He has been the driving force behind HealthRight, the proposal that could change the face of health care in Minnesota and the nation by ensuring access to health care. And he has once again co-chaired the taxes conference committee, which is always one of the most important jobs at the Legislature.

But he is quick to give credit where it is due.

"The Minnesota Nurses Association has pushed health care reform legislation in a wholly selfless fashion since 1987," said Ogren.

Whatever their political persuasion, members from both sides of the aisle say they'll miss Ogren's hard-charging presence.

Never shy about letting his views be known, Ogren is usually found in the middle of the action. While he may relish the individual battles, he is not impressed with the process. He said 12 years in the Legislature has made him very cynical.

"I have found that the voice of the people is a distant whisper in the halls of government," he said.

He doesn't intend to become an entrenched figure in government, telling members at a recent hearing that he will once again enjoy "railing at the system from the outside."

But have the halls of government seen the last of Paul Ogren? Don't bet on it.

During a recent committee meeting — where his HealthRight bill endured a difficult grilling — Ogren said, "I would have to be crazy" to seek higher office.

He is, however, frequently mentioned as a candidate for higher office.

—Bob DeBoer



### Linda Runbeck

Linda Runbeck, the House Independent-Republican from Circle Pines, believes the lagging economy could in fact be used to enliven Minnesota's democratic process.

The belt-tightening and consequent scrutiny of government spending, said Runbeck, should inspire taxpayers to learn what government programs do.

"Without that knowledge," Runbeck recently wrote her constituents in a newspaper column, "we become lazy armchair quarterbacks calling out cheap shots from the sidelines."

"My hot button is citizen access," Runbeck said, when asked about her priorities as a representative for District 52A, most of which lies in Anoka County north of Minneapolis.

She believes citizens should "get back into the process." Among her proposals for the 1991 session was a bill permitting citizens to form "budget review panels" in city and county government to work "in open dialogue" with local government officials.

Runbeck is serving her fourth year in the House this session. She will be giving up her House seat to campaign for the Senate seat now held by Sen. Fritz Knaak (IR-White Bear Lake), who is retiring from the Senate.

Runbeck, a former Circle Pines city councilwoman, helped other candidates run for the House seat six times before she decided to run for the office herself. She won the House seat in a special election in 1989.

As a legislator, Runbeck has sought legislation for small business tax relief, legislative term limits, limited school-night work hours for students, campaign finance reform, and a reduction in the House budget.

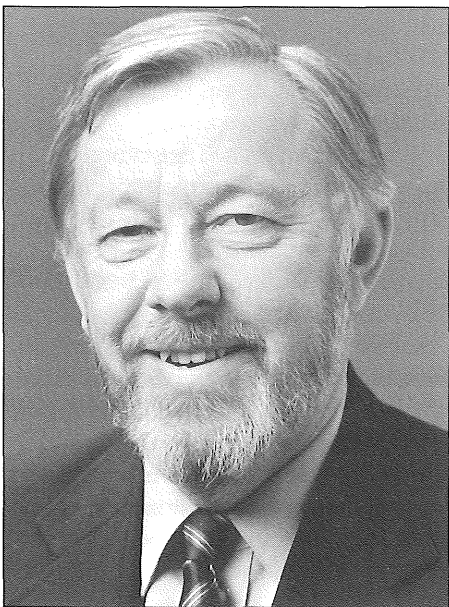
She also has authored several bills to improve living conditions for mobile home residents, whose relationship with mobile park owners, she said, is often "unfair and inequitable." Nine mobile home parks are in her district.

But many of her IR measures have failed to get the required votes in the House. "As a member of the minority party, we have to take our satisfaction in what we can do for our constituents," she said. She said she works "not just to pacify those needs but to help constituents know more about the process so they have tools" to find answers.

The Senate district Runbeck will run in includes the communities of Arden Hills, Circle Pines, North Oaks, and Shoreview. "It is pure Republican — as Republican a district as you can find in Minnesota," she said.

Runbeck believes the Senate "would be a wonderful opportunity to speak the minority position without fear of repercussion. I intend to use it . . . as a way to articulate the platform on government spending, government accountability, ethics, and private sector growth."

—Joyce Peterson



**Arthur Seaberg**

Deciding to retire from the House and run for the Senate was probably a little

easier for Rep. Arthur Seaberg than for any other House member.

"Essentially, the Senate district is the same [size] as my [current] House district with some minor changes," said Seaberg, referring to the dramatic population increase in the Eagan area over the past 10 years.

The Independent-Republican from Eagan now represents nearly 59,000 people — twice as many as any other House member and more than the number of people in 20 current Senate districts.

So the decision to move to the Senate, where the districts are supposed to be twice the size as they are in the House, was an easy one, he said. Although he loves serving in the "more open, more human" House, Seaberg said there are other reasons to run for the Senate.

He said that because the Senate is smaller, it would give him a chance to have greater influence and a chance to serve on more committees.

"I consider myself a generalist anyway," he said.

Seaberg, who runs a small general practice law office from his home, has a relatively low profile at the Legislature and freely admits that he's not "the most vocal person on the floor."

But during Appropriations Committee division meetings, Seaberg frequently questions those who testify in committee in a gentlemanly — and illuminating — fashion.

But ask Seaberg what he feels he does best at the Legislature, and he'll tell you that he listens well — a trait to which many people will attest.

"He is a wonderful advocate for battered women," said Mary Ajax, director of the B. Robert Lewis House in Eagan. "He has really taken the time to learn what the issues are."

She said Seaberg will often phone her before a legislative session begins to see if there are new issues to be addressed on the domestic abuse front.

In the past two years, Seaberg has passed legislation that allows judges to waive the fees required to process a protection order, and allows prosecutors to more easily track past domestic abuse incidents where the defendant is from another state so a harsher sentence can be imposed.

And last year, Seaberg was the chief House sponsor of a bill that requires a court hearing to be held before a person

can be released from an emergency treatment facility such as a detox center.

The bill arose following the highly publicized case of a Sunfish Lake doctor who, after being released from a detox center, fatally shot his wife in front of their two children.

Ajax said Seaberg, whose wife once worked at the B. Robert Lewis House, has "really demonstrated leadership" on the domestic abuse issue.

But she added that he is not limited to tackling such problems on a legislative level. This year, for example, Seaberg suggested that churches and schools be encouraged to become involved in combating the problem.

"He's just real open about thinking in different ways," she said.

—Grant Moos



**Sylvester Uphus**

Rep. Sylvester Uphus of Sauk Centre believes in term limits and has authored several bills on the subject. So it should come as no surprise that after a decade in the House, the Independent-Republican has decided it's time to move on.

While Uphus has been most visible this year as a death penalty proponent, he prefers talking about past successes, such as securing a \$6 million grant for a Pope County school and bringing Melrose a wastewater disposal plant.

"I ran for office because I felt I had something to offer to the people in my part of the state, and to try to make some changes in government," said Uphus. "Back home, on the various boards that I