

# Sekhon stresses education, environmental concerns

As a third- through eighth- grade teacher in Anoka County schools, educational equity is one of Rep. Kathleen Sekhon's (DFL-Burns Township) main concerns.



Rep. Kathleen Sekhon

Sekhon said all four of the school districts she represents suffer from inadequate funding, and two of them are among the lowest statewide in per pupil spending. Sekhon became convinced

that talking about equity just wasn't enough.

"I decided that if we were going to have the money we needed to work with, it was important for me to run for the Legislature and help get that done."

Sekhon (pronounced "SEE-kahn") grew up in Pipestone, the oldest of seven children, and now has three children of her own (two in college; one in high school). Her political life began in 1980, when she attended her first precinct caucus. She "spoke up" and eventually found herself a delegate to the state DFL convention. She then became involved in several feminist, environmental, and other "social change" organizations, all of which helped to

define her agenda for this legislative session.

But it was during her tenure as chair of the DFL Platform and Issues Commission (1984 to 1990) that she was introduced to a broad range of statewide policy issues, she said. As commission chair she also honed her skills of working with others toward a productive end.

"That was the experience that convinced me that I had the skills that I needed to work effectively in committees, and that's how you get things done."

During her campaign in District 50A just north of Minneapolis in Anoka County, Sekhon managed to knock on 10,000 doors. She plans to return to the houses she missed this summer.

Residents told her they were concerned about environmental issues, specifically two sites within the district that are on the federal government's Superfund cleanup list — the Oak Grove and East Bethel landfills. Citizens are frustrated with delays in the cleanup schedule, Sekhon said, and the resulting increased threat of groundwater contamination due to the area's relatively high water table.

Many are also troubled by development issues arising from population growth, and are concerned that area wetlands remain protected. From her positions on both the Environment and Natural Resource Committee and the separate environmental finance panel, Sekhon will

be a voice for her district on these issues.

Although not a member of the Education Committee, Sekhon said she hopes to persuade her colleagues of the need for school funding equity. She also will bring her educational expertise to issues before the Labor-Management Relations Committee, including workplace safety.

Helping small businesses that have limited resources should be a legislative priority, she said.

"We can do a lot as a government to help small employers come up with better ways of doing things."

— Adam Samaha

## District 50A

**Population:** 32,806  
**Counties:** Anoka  
**Largest city:** Andover  
**Largest employer:** Mate Punch & Die, 205 employees  
**Topography:** all 32,806 residents live within an incorporated city  
**1992 presidential election results:**  
Bush/Quayle: 29.7 percent  
Clinton/Gore: 38.3 percent  
Perot/Stockdale: 31.3 percent  
Other: 0.7 percent