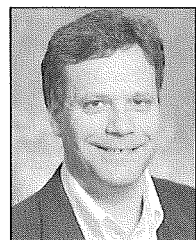


Ray Vandever to focus on taxes, education, crime

By Grant Martin

Recently elected Rep. Ray Vandever (R-Forest Lake) likes to put his money where his mouth is.

"I firmly believe we have a strong and good form of government," he said. "But it's also very delicate, and it depends on one thing and that's citizens being involved at some level or another to make it work."



Rep. Ray Vandever

And he has been involved. Vandever served on the Mounds View Charter Commission. He is a member of the Forest Lake Planning Commission and a former member of the government affairs committee of the Suburban Area Chamber of Commerce. He also has served as a volunteer probation officer in Anoka County.

He said that his experience in local government will help him better serve the people of his legislative district, especially because he is familiar with the current local issues.

"It gives me an idea of what the local problems are in the district I represent," Vandever said. "There are some issues with the proposed merger of Forest Lake and Forest Lake Township that really shine the light on local problems."

Vandever lives in Forest Lake with his wife, Camille, and their four children, Paul, Phillip, Cara, and Alana. He owns a real estate appraisal firm that has been in business since 1981.

He made his first attempt at elected office in

1996 when he challenged incumbent state Sen. Jane Krentz (DFL-May Township) and lost. But Vandever said he was very proud of how the vote turned out, considering the fact that he was running against an incumbent.

"I was pretty convinced that the voters liked and approved of my message to do that well," he said.

Vandever said his numbers were particularly good in the half of that Senate district that comprises his current House district.

So when Rep. Doug Swenson (R-Forest Lake) resigned to take a new job as a judge in the 10th Judicial District Court, Vandever felt that he was the right person for the job.

"I did not expect that to happen when it did and it was clearly an opportunity coming out of the Senate race and doing well on our side of the district against an incumbent," he said. "I thought it was a good fit."

Vandever said that he plans to focus on taxes, crime, and education as a member of the House. He said that taxes are too high in Minnesota, and he will focus on providing tax relief for families.

"My priorities will be lower taxes and reduced state spending. I want to work very hard to see that we reduce that level of taxation for hard-working families," he said.

Vandever said that the state also has to protect its population against violent crime.

"We want a clear signal that this is the wrong place, the wrong state to come and commit violent crime," he said.

When it comes to violent crime, the state must be concerned with safety first — more than rehabilitation — but the state should also work on developing prevention programs to

keep youth out of crime, Vandever said.

"I served as a volunteer probation officer a number of years ago in Anoka County, and I do think that those kinds of programs that work with youth are the probably the most likely to be successful," he said. "Getting to kids, I think this is where we have the best chance of success."

Vandever says that he wants to ensure the quality of education in his district.

"I think equitable funding for education is a big issue in a lot of suburban districts, and ours is no exception. That is important to me," he said.

Vandever won the special election on Jan. 27 and he was sworn in to office on Feb. 5. He said that after a week on the job, he has been impressed by the speed at which things move in the Legislature and with the commitment of the members.

"There are people I have met on both sides, from both parties who are passionate about their views and representing their constituents," he said. "It really confirms my appreciation for our system of government."

District 51B

1995 population: 40,179
Largest city: Lino Lakes
Counties: Anoka, Washington
Location: Northeastern suburban metro
Top concern: "Reducing the level of taxation. I think clearly in Minnesota we're overtaxed. I want to work very hard to see that we reduce that level of taxation for hard-working families. That's very important to me."

—Rep. Ray Vandever

Frequently called numbers

Secretary of the Senate
 231 Capitol 296-0271
 Voice mail/order bills 296-2343
Chief Clerk of the House
 211 Capitol 296-2314
Index, Senate
 110 Capitol 296-2887
Index, House
 211 Capitol 296-6646
Information, Senate
 231 Capitol 296-0504
Information, House
 175 State Office Building 296-2146
Committee Hotline, Senate ... 296-8088

Committee Hotline, House 296-9283
Sergeant at Arms, Senate
 Senate Chamber 296-7159/6-1119
Sergeant at Arms, House
 45 State Office Building 296-4860
Counsel and Research, Senate
 G-17 Capitol 296-4791
Research, House
 600 State Office Building 296-6753
Legislative Reference Library
 645 State Office Building 296-3398
Revisor of Statutes
 700 State Office Building 296-2868

Governor's Office
 130 Capitol 296-3391
Attorney General's Office
 102 Capitol 296-6196
Secretary of State's Office
 180 State Office Building 296-9208
Capitol Security
 B-4 Capitol 296-6741
Emergency 296-2100
TTY*, Senate 296-0250
 Toll free 1-888-234-1116
TTY*, House 296-9896
 Toll free 1-800-657-3550