

Small town vitality top concern for Vickerman

As a small business owner and Independent-Republican Party activist involved in community affairs, Rep. Barb Vickerman (IR-Redwood Falls) has always been concerned about economic development in small town Minnesota.



Rep. Barb Vickerman

Two years ago, she sold the card and gift shop she owned for nearly 18 years in Redwood Falls. With that responsibility gone, it seemed like

a good time to make a move she had been considering for several years — a run for the state Legislature.

“Everything I’ve done, I’ve always had a lot of people contact,” she said, explaining why she was not content to stay home. The fact that she is known to so many people throughout her district is probably the reason she ended up running unopposed in the general election after she won her party’s nomination, she said.

Working on other IR candidates’ campaigns and observing the Legislature’s accomplish-

ments with a critical eye are what stirred her to become part of the process.

“There are a lot of laws that are not that necessary — especially when it comes to business regulation — that make it difficult to do business,” she said. “We should put a little more confidence in the ability of people to act responsibly and not always be passing laws to make them.”

Some of the principal concerns of her constituents in District 23A, a mainly agricultural district that includes the cities of New Ulm and Redwood Falls, are the availability of child care for working mothers, high property tax rates, and school funding.

“We’re becoming an aging population. So to offer everything you need [academically] is more than a small population can support, in some cases,” said Vickerman.

The high cost of workers’ compensation is also a top issue in the district for both businesses and non-profit organizations such as nursing homes. Although unemployment is low, the district needs to attract more businesses that offer well-paying jobs to lure young people back to the area after they complete college, Vickerman said. She hates to see com-

panies that could provide such jobs move to nearby South Dakota where the cost of doing business is lower.

Vickerman is married to Gerry Vickerman, a land surveyor. They have four grown children.

Since taking office, the freshman legislator has been pleasantly surprised by the volume of mail and calls she has received.

“All these years I always said, ‘Write to your legislators,’ and I didn’t realize how many actually did,” she said.

— Ruth Hammond

District 23A

Population: 33,056

Counties: Brown, Redwood

Largest city: Redwood Falls

Largest employer: Jackpot Junction Casino, 856 employees

Topography: 63.6 percent of residents living inside an incorporated city; 34.4 percent living in rural areas.

1992 presidential election results:

Bush/Quayle: 40.4 percent

Clinton/Gore: 30.5 percent

Perot/Stockdale: 28.4 percent

Other: 0.7 percent

Elk River DFLer offers ‘Cleansing Thoughts’

As a journalist-turned-legislator, Rep. Stephanie Klinzing (DFL-Elk River) realizes she has a different attitude toward protecting the public’s right to know than some of her new colleagues.



Rep. Stephanie Klinzing

“What I turn out to be — maybe to some people’s dismay — is more public than those in power may want me to be,” she said. Nevertheless, she holds her tongue when she

hears some of her new colleagues bashing the media.

“If they don’t have an appreciation of freedom of the press, I’m not the one who’s going to convince them of that.”

Before she got into politics, Klinzing worked as a journalist for 20 years, the last 11 with the *Elk River Star News*. Having covered government issues for so long, “I thought I had as much knowledge as anybody,” she said. So, four years ago, she decided to switch from affecting public policy by writing editorials to being a decision

maker. She ran for the Sherburne County Board and won.

After a tough nomination fight, Klinzing launched a campaign remarkable for its use of two donkey-like pets to symbolize the Democratic Party. In the interests of full disclosure, Klinzing admits the donkeys are actually mules, now meeting another household need by grazing on the 80 acres she and her family own in Elk River.

Her four years as a county commissioner made Klinzing aware that if change is going to occur, it must take place at the state level. She is especially concerned about state mandates placed on counties that are not accompanied by funding, resulting in a higher property tax burden on county residents.

Klinzing’s District 19B is “property-poor,” she said. Relatively few businesses and industries share the tax burden with an ever-growing number of residents who commute to the Twin Cities to work.

A clear message Klinzing got from her constituents is that they want no tax increases of any kind. Klinzing said she will do her best to abide by that wish. Among her early priorities

are reforming county ditch laws to alleviate drainage problems in new residential areas, and seeking forgiveness of a \$500,000 penalty against Sherburne County for exceeding the state levy limit.

Klinzing has the perfect avenue to keep her constituents well informed. Her observations from the Capitol will appear in her resurrected column, “Klinzing (pronounced ‘Cleansing’) Thoughts,” in the *Elk River Star News*.

— Ruth Hammond

District 19B

Population: 32,913

Counties: Sherburne, Wright

Largest city: Elk River

Largest employer: United Power Association, 425 employees

Topography: 59.2 percent of residents living inside an incorporated city; 40.8 percent living in rural areas.

1992 presidential election results:

Bush/Quayle: 35 percent

Clinton/Gore: 34.9 percent

Perot/Stockdale: 29.3 percent

Other: 0.8 percent