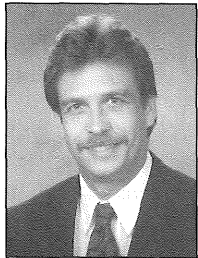


Straight shooter

Walz brings law enforcement background, and interests in gun owners' and property owners' rights to the Legislature

By **TERESA STAHL**

Like other elected officials in the state, Rep. Dale Walz (R-Brainerd) advocates a smaller, less intrusive government.



Rep. Dale Walz

"One of the roles of government is to enable people to take care of themselves, but not to take care of the people," he said.

Walz campaigned for a spot in the Legislature by suggesting that he would not "over-govern" as a

member of the House. His 2000 campaign for district 12A came after a loss in 1998, where he earned 46.3 percent of the vote.

"I decided that was good enough to try again," he said.

Promoting tax rebates, equitable school funding, and property owners and gun owners rights, Walz is now a part of a political body he's always been drawn to.

"As long as I can remember I've been interested in politics," he said.

Walz defeated incumbent Rep. Kris Hasskamp (DFL-Crosby) in November 2000. Hasskamp had served in the House since 1988.

A police officer for 16 years, and now serving as captain in the Baxter Police Department, Walz said the biggest plus he can contribute to the Legislature, and particularly his spot on the House Crime Prevention Committee, is his experience as a law enforcement official. He has been a member of Minnesota Sex Crimes Investigators Association and has specialized in child molestation issues.

Although Walz's good friend and fellow officer, Russ Wicklund, doesn't live in the same district and therefore couldn't vote for him, Wicklund says Walz will be an excellent representative.

"He's very good with people," and at asking questions, listening, and problem solving, Wicklund said.

Wicklund, who started working with Walz in March 1990, was surprised to learn Walz

would be running for state office, but didn't doubt his ability to do the job well.

"I could see him doing anything he set his mind to," he said.

Walz has been involved with many state organizations during his time with the police department.

"He works with a lot of county investigators, state officers, and pollution control," Wicklund said. "He works with every kind of agency in the area when the job calls for it."

Walz says his background of working with city councils and other government entities

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—Rep. Dale Walz

will contribute to his work at the Capitol.

"It's on a much grander scale down here," he said, "but it helps a little bit."

Eager for results in tax cuts, Walz said he plans to support action on tax reform.

"Hopefully we can get the budget surplus returned to the taxpayers, see more prominent income tax cuts, and some restructuring and reforming of property taxes," he said.

Besides belonging to the Crime Prevention Committee, Walz serves on two other committees. They are the House Commerce, Jobs and Economic Development Policy Committee and the House Jobs and Economic Development Finance Committee. He is also the vice chair of the Economic Development and Tourism Division of the Commerce Policy committee.

"We're seeing a lot more development in Crow Wing County," Walz said of the district he represents.

Working to strengthen Greater Minnesota, Walz says equitable funding for schools in rural areas is one of the biggest issues he promoted during his campaign.

Also of significance to his district and a concern of Walz's is property owners' and gun

owners' rights. He fully supports people's right to bear arms, and at the same time understands the importance of teaching children gun safety and respect for weapons.

"A lot of it is parental responsibility," Walz said. He has three children, ages 6, 10, and 16.

"My son is 6, and he likes to look at my guns," said Walz, who keeps his guns locked in a vault where his children can't get to them. "But I taught my son — my daughters, too — respect for guns and that they're not toys."

Walz said his two younger children don't really understand why their dad now works in St. Paul, but his 16-year-old daughter is interested in her father's new job. His children live in Owatonna with their mother, and his new role at the Capitol allows him to see them more.

In his spare time, Walz also enjoys deer hunting, walleye fishing, and working on his 1951 Ford.

Walz, who is a member of Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life (MCCL), said pro-life legislation is important to him. "I can't change that — it's here," he said, pointing to his heart. "It's the way I am."

Right now Walz is on leave from the police department, but he fully intends on keeping his law enforcement career and will be going back to work in June. Wicklund says the department already senses his absence.

"We miss him, but we know he'll be back," he said. "He has a very important job down there and takes it very seriously."

DISTRICT 12A

1998 population (estimate): 36,471

Largest city: Brainerd

County: Crow Wing

Location: north central Minnesota

Top concern: "Equity funding for schools, returning the surplus, and more permanent tax cuts."

—Rep. Dale Walz