

New members . . .

Tales from 'dogwatch' bring Stanek to Legislature

As a detective in the Minneapolis Police Department's Robbery Unit, Rep. Richard Stanek (IR-Maple Grove) sat at a desk next to then state Sen. Pat McGowan.



Rep. Richard Stanek

government.

McGowan left the Senate last year to become Hennepin County Sheriff, indirectly creating an opening for Stanek, who had considered running for elective office for years.

So when former Rep. Warren Limmer decided to run for McGowan's Senate seat, Stanek said he "jumped at the opportunity" to run for Limmer's old seat in the special election that was held March 7.

Now, Stanek will be in the unique position of applying the crime laws he will help craft as a member of the Judiciary Committee — a committee he said he was excited to be appointed to.

"I'm a practitioner in the field of law enforcement and I bring that practical point of view with me to the Legislature," said Stanek, who joined the Minneapolis Police Department in 1986 and currently holds the rank of sergeant.

He thinks there are "unique approaches out there" to fighting crime that won't burden the state budget and require tax hikes.

"There are a number of ways that we can keep our tough stance on crime . . . while not devoting millions and millions of dollars to

something that's not working," said Stanek. "This is what the public wants; crime is still the number one issue."

He suggests continued funding for crime prevention and victim services, but draws the line on taxpayers footing the bill for lawsuits filed by prison inmates "who sue the state because their underwear is too tight. Is that nonsense? Absolutely. Are there loopholes that the Legislature should shut down? Absolutely."

Although Stanek is the House's newest member, he's no stranger to politics and the Legislature. He worked as a volunteer on campaigns for both Limmer and McGowan.

And in 1991 he was appointed by the governor as chair of the Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Board, which licenses Minnesota police officers.

In that capacity, Stanek testified before legislative committees about law enforcement issues. (He resigned from the POST Board, however, after being elected to the Legislature.)

Now that his long-held "dream" of serving in the Legislature is fulfilled, he says he enjoys the view from the other side of the table.

"I get to see firsthand how decisions are made, how the policy is made, and what thought and rationale goes into some of the policies. Some I agree with, some I don't," Stanek said.

In addition to his input on criminal justice issues, Stanek will have a voice in shaping the state's K-12 and higher education policy as a member of the Education Committee.

He has also been involved in numerous community projects.

Stanek is the founder and guiding force behind Cops Care, a group of police volun-

teers who try to "bridge the gap between police and at-risk minority youth" in Minneapolis.

The group sponsors community baseball and basketball teams, and takes kids to Timberwolves games and on week-long canoe trips in the Boundary Waters.

Stanek's involvement with Cops Care was recognized last September by KARE-11 TV, which presented him with their Eleven Who Care award for exemplary community service.

A native of northeast Minneapolis, Stanek holds a B.A. in Criminal Justice from the University of Minnesota, and an M.A. in Public Administration from Hamline University.

He and his wife, Sally, have a son, Ryan, 2, who has already checked out the red and green voting buttons on his dad's desk on the House floor.

Stanek is "expecting anytime" to hear the signal from the beeper clipped to his belt, which will tell him to "come on home" and prepare for the birth of their second child.

— Mordecai Spektor

District 33B

Population: 33,205
Distribution: 100 percent urban
County: Hennepin
Largest city: Maple Grove
Location: northwestern Metro
Unemployment rate: 2.88 percent
Residents living below poverty level: 2.54 percent
1992 presidential election results:
Bush/Quayle 37.53 percent
Clinton/Gore 36.75 percent
Perot/Stockdale 25.02 percent
Other: 0.7 percent