

Real-world experience

Hoppe brings telecommunications, commerce, and transportation background to new role as legislator

By MICHELLE KIBIGER

It wasn't just one thing that made Rep. Joe Hoppe (R-Chaska) decide to run for the House of Representatives. But a number of conversations with members of his community and particularly retiring House member Tom Workman (R-Chanhassen) helped encourage him to give it a try.



Rep. Joe Hoppe

Workman's support, Hoppe says, was very important to his candidacy.

And while Hoppe says he will be very interested in transportation issues, like Workman was during his tenure, he also brings a number of other experiences to the job – including employment in commerce and the telecommunications industry, and an interest in the outdoors and preserving natural resources.

Specifically, he most recently worked for a telecommunications company, which handled both transmission of data applications, such as dedicated private lines, and long-distance services. He also spent time working with freight companies where his responsibilities included managing shipping between the Canadian headquarters and the large companies throughout Minnesota.

His philosophy: rein in spending to keep the budget in balance, allow consumers choice in the services they receive, and create an environment that will encourage business development and sustain that commerce throughout the state.

Hoppe says one of his strengths as a legislator will be how he brings real world experience to various facets of policymaking.

"It's important to have normal people from everyday life represent the state and represent the district, and then go back to normal life," Hoppe said.

Like many suburban Twin Cities residents, Hoppe understands what it's like to commute along the I-494 corridor and the congestion many drivers face on the roads each day. He also says he's concerned about the traffic trav-

eling through his district on U.S. Highway 212.

In addition, he says he'll be interested in natural resources issues, such as clean air and water, and preserving the wild spaces in the state.

Hoppe will serve on the House Environment and Natural Resources policy and finance committees, Rules and Legislative Administration, and the Regulated Industries Committee.

A solid educational system and good schools

are among other priorities for Hoppe's district, an area populated in large part by growing families.

Hoppe plans to stay connected with constituents in his district by meeting regularly with groups and helping educate the public about the role state government plays in people's daily lives. He said the budget crisis provides an opportunity to shed light on how things work. Constituents are holding elected officials to a higher standard, as well.

"I think people ... want the state to (pay attention to) things a little bit more during an economic time like this. When times are good and there are rebate checks, people don't look as closely," he said.

The campaign was good preparation for the upcoming session, Hoppe said. Not only did it help him to acquire a good understanding of his constituents' interests, it helped him develop a good rapport with them – regardless of their political affiliation.

"Being a candidate was an enormous amount of work," Hoppe said. "But I got to meet a lot of people I would have never met. It was fun. ... You learn you have to keep in contact with a lot of people."

Tom Furlong, newly elected mayor of Chanhassen, said Hoppe's people skills will be an asset to him as a legislator. So will his broad experiences in issues Furlong said are important to the people in the district, which is less rural since redistricting following the 2000 census.

"He's a man of good character, and I think that's important," Furlong said. "He's looking to do what's right and not necessarily what's politically expedient."

Furlong, also an acquaintance of Workman's, said the two are comparable in their commitment to serve the district and their constituents.

"I think we're going to be very well served by (having) Joe in the Legislature," Furlong said. "And I think we're going to be very proud

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of him."

Hoppe said that although he knows his role as legislator will take away some of his time with his wife Deanne, 5-year-old daughter Elizabeth, and 3-year-old son Michael, he hopes they'll appreciate his work when they're older.

"Hopefully they'll look back on this in five years or 10 years and say, 'Hey, my dad was a state representative,' and he did the best job he could."

DISTRICT 34B

2002 population: 36,696

Largest city: Chanhassen

Counties: Carver, Hennepin

Location: southwest Twin Cities suburbs

Top concern: "I really want (Highway) 212 to get done. That's really going to help the people in Chaska and points west."

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