

# At the plate

## Stadium issue got her involved, but transportation is now a key issue for new representative Osterman

By **MIRANDA BRYANT**

If there's anything that Rep. Lynne Osterman (R-New Hope) understands, it is jobs. She's advocated for them on behalf of



Rep. Lynne Osterman

others, she's competed for them for herself, and in the case of her children, she's dictated them.

To this day she and her husband, Ron, say to their two children, "Your job while you're with us is to learn to grow up

and our job is to help you."

The 40-year-old said her new job as a legislator is to reflect the priorities of her constituents in New Hope, and in portions of Plymouth and Crystal. "If I have one thing to do here it is to know that that chair I sit in on the House floor is theirs, not mine," she said. "It sounds canned, but it's not."

It's a job she worked harder than many to get. The St. Cloud State University graduate sought election as a state representative in 1998 and 2000 before achieving victory in 2002.

"I had known I had wanted to run (for office) in college," said Osterman, who admitted she loves campaigning.

What actually catapulted her toward her race, however, was the Twins baseball stadium issue. Sen. Ann Rest (DFL-New Hope), who was a representative at the time, had sponsored a bill authorizing state funding for the stadium. As the mother of two school-age children, Osterman didn't think it was a good priority, she said.

Though Rest proved victorious by 2.4 percent (340 votes) in 1998, Osterman said she continues to respect the legislator, who was later elected to the Senate. "She is one of the brightest persons to have served in the House."

Osterman learned a lot during her three separate campaigns. And the caucus leadership became very aware of the issues she says she finds important, like transportation. Her

district, 45A, is dissected by U.S Highway 169.

As a result, she has co-sponsored a bill aimed at selling \$1 billion in bonds over the next four years for road construction and maintenance. The package would specifically address, among other issues, congested areas and mass transit. Osterman also said she intends to sponsor legislation to expand the Northwest Corridor bus route that reaches into the northwest suburbs from Minneapolis.

"What (this) signifies is our caucus' willingness to move ahead and make a dent in the transportation needs of Minnesota," she said.

Bonding is necessary, Osterman added, to create road construction funds that aren't otherwise available. At the same time, she supports raising the gas tax.

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"I, for one, do view the gas tax as a user fee and I would like us to expand funding for roads by seriously considering the gas tax."

Republican House leaders assigned Osterman to the House Commerce, Jobs, and Economic Development Policy; Jobs and Economic Development Finance; and Regulated Industries committees.

"What I know of Lynne is I would see her as a straight shooter, a consensus builder. And she brings some real leadership qualities to the table," said Ken Warner, former president of the St. Cloud Chamber of Commerce.

"She's got a determination like no one else I've met," Warner added. "When she sets her mind to something, she's going to keep going after it."

Given her background, Osterman said she feels well matched to committees dealing with jobs and economic development. Previously, she was: project manager for the Office of Lifework Development at the state's education

department; director of the Partners in Education program for the St. Cloud Chamber of Commerce; and executive director of Manufacturing Technology of Minnesota.

One thing she said she tried to emphasize during her last job was the broad range of occupations that require higher-level math and science skills, including those in the manufacturing industry. She said she discovered that few high school students are choosing manufacturing jobs because the industry is not good at marketing itself. Osterman encouraged teachers to talk about lesser-known jobs, such as fluid power technicians.

Though she supported the committee proposed cuts to groups such as Minnesota Technology, Inc., as part of the overall budget-balancing legislation that passed the House, Osterman said she considers Minnesota Technology Inc., a technology based economic development organization, an "awesome resource."

"They're kind of one of us," Osterman said. "They're on our team."

She finds it strange, she said, that

Minnesota Technology Inc., which helped 1,474 companies in the past two years create high-wage jobs in rural Minnesota, has to lobby for funds before the Legislature.

"I would rather have people get paid to do something they're good at and love and have the government get out of the way ... so that happens for people," she explained.

### DISTRICT 45A

**2002 population:** 36,983

**Largest city:** Plymouth

**Location:** western Twin Cities suburbs  
**County:** Hennepin

**Top Concern:** Traffic congestion is "right in front of us and we deal with it every day."

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