

New members . . .

# Warkentin carries heavy load: tax time and session

Rep. Eldon Warkentin, the newest member of the House, says his April 10 swearing-in ceremony was one of the most exciting days of his life. But he also knows the thrill won't last.



Rep. Eldon Warkentin

Now it's time to get down to hard work. And Warkentin, who dives into a session two-thirds finished, faces a tougher lot than some. In order to make informed votes

on the floor, he has to pick up on issues in midstream and follow bills that have already received full hearings.

"Today was a highly emotional day," he said on the day he was officially sworn in as a House member. "Being sworn in was a very exciting moment. I got to press the voting button quite a bit, but mostly for consent calendar bills which received little discussion and were fairly easy to comprehend."

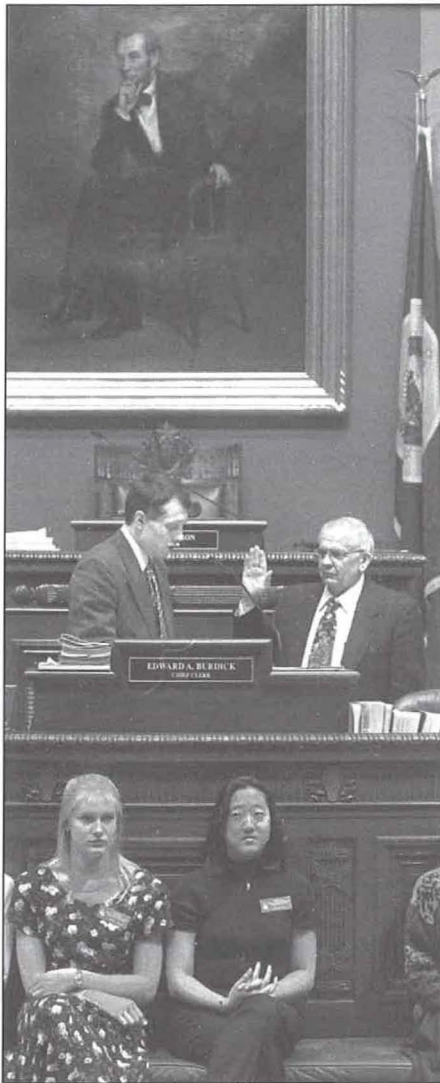
Warkentin, an Independent-Republican, comes to the Capitol from Coon Rapids after winning an April 4 special election to fill former Rep. Joel Jacobs' seat. Jacobs, who was in his 12th House term, was appointed to the Public Utilities Commission by Gov. Arne Carlson.

The results of the three-way race for the open seat continues the IR tradition of winning special elections — even in traditionally DFL areas. Warkentin said his election means an IR will represent his district for the first time.

Though he's a member of several professional groups and is now in his sixth term as executive chairman of the Coon Rapids Evangelical Free Church, Warkentin has never held a political office.

"This is the first time I've ever been involved in politics. In fact, I've never attended a caucus to tell the truth. I've always been a faithful voter, but I've never been a player in the political arena," he said.

He was encouraged to run by several friends and by clients at the public accounting practice he operates in Coon Rapids. With their backing, Warkentin started to think seri-



Rep. Eldon Warkentin, right, the newest member of the Minnesota House, was given the oath of office by Minority Leader Steve Sviggum April 10 in the House chamber.

ously about throwing his hat into the ring.

"I felt my experiences as owner of my own accounting practice and as an accountant helped me understand people. I hear what people are talking about. I thought I could impact legislation with my insights," he said.

His daughter, Colleen Graber, served as his campaign manager for the intense, one-month campaign. They papered the district with fliers announcing his candidacy. And he

walked miles, knocking on numerous district doors along the way, he said.

Warkentin and his wife, Esther, also have another daughter, a son, and six grandchildren.

He will bring a business-oriented focus to the Capitol, he said. He wants to work on legislation that will improve the business climate. Workers' compensation reform is "very important on the list of items I'd like to address," he said.

Warkentin will also look at legislative issues through his role as a small business owner. Those business people face a hostile tax climate and some taxes levied against them, Warkentin feels, are unfairly imposed or unnecessary.

He also pledges to work for tougher criminal laws, for welfare reform, and for laws that would hold parents more accountable for their children's behavior.

Though Warkentin has plunged into a session that is two-thirds over, he also has another consideration: tax time.

This is the busiest time of year for the accountant of 27 years. But he's taking it in stride.

"I'll just have to work in the evenings and weekends. Luckily, someone who used to work for me is willing to come back and help out on his evenings and weekends," Warkentin said.

"So far at the Legislature things are going great," he said on the day of his swearing-in. "But I've only been here one day."

— Jean Thilmany

## District 49B

**Population:** 33,208  
**Distribution:** 100 percent urban  
**County:** Anoka  
**Largest city:** Coon Rapids  
**Location:** north Metro  
**Unemployment rate:** 4.52 percent  
**Residents living below poverty level:** 5.51 percent  
**1992 presidential election results:**

Bush/Quayle	29.63 percent
Clinton/Gore	42.91 percent
Perot/Stockdale	26.69 percent
Other	0.77 percent