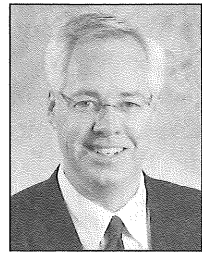


# Performing on a new stage

## Charron merges love of arts and politics in the House

By **PATTY JANOVEC**

When thinking about the nuances of being a freshman House member, Rep. Mike Charron (R-Woodbury) said he feels the same sense of



Rep. Mike Charron

child-like wonder as on Christmas Eve.

"This is my first new job in 22 years," he joked.

A professor and chair of the theatre department at Concordia University in St. Paul, Charron said many educators are public service oriented. He is

no different and has been actively involved in his home community. "Almost on a whim someone said, 'You should really run for city council,'" he said. And he did, and won.

With his years of teaching and council service, Charron said he has gained valuable experience understanding the issues he is facing as a legislator. "It brought me some

insights into things, passion for things, that fuel the fire for me here."

People have asked Charron how he balances his arts interest and political affiliation.

"A lot of the biggest arts supporters I know are Republican, but they support the arts with their own money," he explained. "The more things are subsidized by government, the more the government is going to have a say. . . . I don't want the government having a lot of say in art."

A major issue he wants to address is who should control local development – the state, Metropolitan Council or local governments – an especially important issue in his rapidly growing district. He said growth needs to be done simply, while "balancing the needs for conserving natural resources, open space, and respecting the rights of landowners to both develop or not develop."

He's a co-sponsor of one of the session's early bills, HF2, relating to health savings accounts that would allow people to establish

## DISTRICT 56A

2002 Population: 36,812

Largest city: Woodbury

County: Washington

Top concern: Controlling development

***"The more things are subsidized by government, the more the government is going to have a say. . . . I don't want the government having a lot of say in art."***

— Rep. Mike Charron

an interest-earning medical account to pay for their expenses. Small businesses that cannot afford to offer health care insurance to their employees would be able to do so under the proposal, he said.

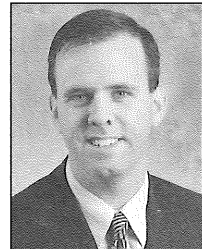
Charron, who has biked across Iowa five times and considers himself a Lance Armstrong wannabe, is determined to maintain his integrity. "In all of my discussions and dealings with my colleagues and constituents I want to be known as a man of my word."

# From behind the scenes

## Garofalo looks to move out of legislative gridlock

By **MIKE COOK**

Rep. Pat Garofalo (R-Farmington) has come from behind the political scenes to a seat in the House chamber.



Rep. Pat Garofalo

"I'm super-excited to get started," he said before session began. "I think we're going to surprise some people this year with how much work we are going to get done."

Garofalo replaces Steve Strachan who left the House after being named Lakeville's police chief last spring.

"Two years ago I was his campaign manager," he said. "Steve has just been a fantastic mentor. One of the things he said to me was that there is a lot of pressure to be partisan and not work with others across the aisle, but by working with them you'll be much more effective and get more things done."

Garofalo represents a district that is an almost even mix of rural and suburban. "It's a great district to represent because of that. During the campaign I had the chance to go out and visit some farms in action, and a couple of times I brought my wife and kids with and that was a great experience. To have one of the few districts that is split down the middle gives me a very balanced view of how both sides see an issue."

That is especially true in education and transportation – two areas of concern for district residents, he said.

"In the rural areas, it's not as focused on traffic congestion as it is road safety where you have large traffic volumes on single-lane roads.

"As for education, in the metro it's more of a focus on education funding and education accountability; where in the rural areas, such as the Randolph School District, the issue is more local control. They are very concerned about federal and state politicians coming in

## DISTRICT 36B

2002 population: 36,713

Largest city: Lakeville

Counties: Dakota, Goodhue

Top concerns: Education funding, traffic congestion

***"Traffic is such a huge problem in the south metro, and the busway is a transportation solution that can last for generations. It's a significant investment but it will reap rewards long term."***

— Rep. Pat Garofalo

and telling them what to do when they know their community best."

If he could have offered the first bill of 2005, Garofalo said it would have been funding for the Cedar Avenue busway to help alleviate congestion on a freeway that many of his constituents take on a daily basis.

"Traffic is such a huge problem in the south metro, and the busway is a transportation solution that can last for generations," he said. "It's a significant investment but it will reap rewards long term."