

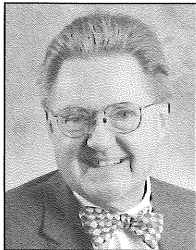
# Governance with patience

## Peterson takes on new role to serve familiar constituency

BY LEE ANN SCHUTZ

Bow ties.

Rep. Neil W. Peterson (R-Bloomington) wears them for a reason. “You remember me, don’t you?”



Rep. Neil W. Peterson

It’s not that he’s trying to draw attention to himself; the ties are more of a personal statement. It’s his way of saying the stereotypical life of a retiree is not for him — he’s living life his way. And that is to

continue a life of public service.

Representing a portion of Bloomington is a continuation of his long years of service to that constituency. He served three terms as the city’s mayor, and four terms as a city councilor. During some of that time, he steered the city through the opening of the Mall of America.

Peterson had very little time to make his decision to run for the House. Six-term representative Alice Seagren was appointed commissioner of education by Gov. Tim Pawlenty on the last day candidates could file to run for the Legislature.

“My wife suggested I run, and so did an acquaintance. So I jumped in, and here I am.”

Now that he’s at the Capitol, he’s exercising patience with the process. “I don’t have an agenda. Good governance is important, and I think that means not opening your mouth first, but instead, observe what is going on and listen to your constituency and instincts.”

Although his district covers the western portion of Bloomington, if, on the east side of the city, a casino becomes part of any Mall of America expansion, it would impact his constituents. He explained that the hospitality industry, with more than 8,000 hotel rooms along Interstate 494, has a huge impact on the

## DISTRICT 41B

2002 population: 36,523  
Largest city: Bloomington  
County: Hennepin  
Top concern: Transportation

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local economy.

His sense is that the people there do not want a casino, nor is he in favor of balancing the state budget on gambling revenue.

Peterson describes his district, which also includes a portion of Edina, as mature, second-ring suburbs with a population that is older and high income. He sees good connecting roads as one of the area’s greatest concerns.