

Large expanse, many issues

Sailer is working on variety of subjects for her constituents

By **MIKE COOK**

It takes Rep. Brita Sailer (DFL-Park Rapids) more than two hours to drive from her home to the northernmost part of her district.



Rep. Brita Sailer

With such a geographic expanse, come a variety of issues.

Affordable and accessible health care is of importance to her constituency. "It is affecting people in so many ways — more than just on a personal level, but

certainly on the economic level." She has spoken with people who work more than one job, yet can't afford health care. People are affected by past cuts to MinnesotaCare, she said. Additionally, small business owners want to provide some kind of health care for their employees, but it's tough.

Such is also the case for school districts

that have had little success in passing levy referendums. "We want to make sure that all Minnesotans have equal access to quality education," she said.

Before being elected, Sailer got to know some of her constituents through her work, which she terms, "A Dating Service for Waste Materials."

The materials exchange program is one of several around the state. "My job is to think 'who could use this and how could we get it there?' It's really great to help out both ends, save money, sometimes thousands of dollars," and save resources as well.

For example, she said a company in a nearby county benefited from the program. The company was making packaging for Rubbermaid containers and once the packaging was developed, many of the containers used in the testing process went to schools and nonprofits rather than a landfill.

Despite her employment activity, Sailer

DISTRICT 2B

2002 population: 36,538
Largest city: Park Rapids
Counties: Beltrami, Clearwater, Hubbard, Pennington and Polk
Top concerns: Health care and education

There are telecommunication issues in Sailer's district, such as inconsistent cell phone coverage and the lack of high-speed Internet.

does not serve on an environment committee. She is on the House Education Policy and Reform, Rules and Legislative Administration and Commerce and Financial Institutions committees, including the Tourism Division of the latter. That is fine with her.

"It comes back to representing the district," she said, noting that there are telecommunication issues in her district, such as inconsistent cell phone coverage and the lack of high-speed Internet. Additionally, many district businesses rely on tourism dollars.

Importance of tradition

New member resolves to make a difference

By **MATT WETZEL**

Rep. Steve Simon (DFL-St. Louis Park) ran for his legislative seat because he believed the state had gotten away from its tradition of good government.



Rep. Steve Simon

"I was worried the state was getting off on the wrong track, and I felt I could help move it back in the right direction. I didn't think we were going to get the kind of changes that we needed by changing the minds

of the people at the Legislature. We had to change the bodies." He defeated six-term Republican Rep. Jim Rhodes by 11.3 percent.

After earning an undergraduate degree in political science, Simon, in 1992, went to work on the campaign staff of former

President Clinton. He said the experience was invaluable. Viewers of the movie, "The War Room," a documentary about the Clinton presidential campaign, might have caught a 2-second glimpse of Simon.

After the campaign, Simon earned his law degree. He then worked on consumer, tax and education issues in the Attorney General's office under Hubert "Skip" Humphrey III, and also Mike Hatch. He joined the Minneapolis law firm of Robins, Kaplan, Miller and Ciresi LLP, where he represents businesses.

Simon believes quality public education is important to his constituents and that it might be compromised because of "flat state funding."

If he could have introduced the first bill of the session, it would have provided more financial help for schools. "I think the schools in our area have really felt the pinch of the cuts in the last two years," he said.

DISTRICT 44A

2002 Population: 36,849
Largest city: St. Louis Park
County: Hennepin
Top concerns: Education, health care and transportation

"I saw, firsthand, how families can get kicked around by the system. It didn't just make me mad, I resolved to try to do something about it."

— Rep. Steve Simon

Other key issues are health care and transportation.

"Sickness doesn't discriminate, whether you're rich or poor or black or white. I saw, firsthand, how families can get kicked around by the system. It didn't just make me mad, I resolved to try to do something about it," he said. He serves on the House Transportation, and Civil Law and Elections committees.