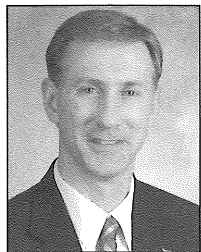


New but experienced

Gottwalt brings nine years of city council experience

By **STEPHEN HARDING**

Rep. Steve Gottwalt (R-St. Cloud) sees being in politics as an extension of giving back to the community.



Rep. Steve Gottwalt

And he's done just that for a decade.

Having served on the St. Cloud City Council for nine years, Gottwalt is now starting his first term at the Capitol. "I'm not one to sit on the sidelines and criticize," he said.

Gottwalt offers a message to the people of the state, "I believe we live in a land of opportunity, not entitlement. I believe government has an important but limited role to play in addressing our needs and wants."

A main issue facing his district is transportation. Gottwalt sees the Northstar

commuter rail line as vital link from his area to the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

"From St. Cloud to Rochester, it is one of the fastest growing parts of the Midwest, if not the whole country," he said, adding that this link is vital to the long-term growth of St. Cloud.

Gottwalt is serving on two education committees. He plans to introduce a bill forcing mandated programs to be fully funded. "If we're going to have mandated programs, we need to be told up front on how it is going to be paid," he said.

"It's not about dollars, it's about excellence. Teachers need to be accountable for their performance," said Gottwalt, who also believes that parents must also be held accountable for their student's academic achievement or failure.

"Parent involvement is the number-one indicator for success in school," Gottwalt said. "Two generations of parenting skills

DISTRICT 15A

2002 population: 36,702

Largest city: St. Cloud

County: Stearns

Top concerns: Education and business

have been lost, and this is negatively affecting today's youth and their ability to learn." With more and more single parents raising children alone, generations of children are going without fathers who would normally be there to help and raise their young, he said.

Gottwalt wants to see best practices being implemented in schools, instead of more money "being thrown at a problem."

"We should take ideas from around the state and try to implement what works in other schools, he said."

A communications director for a grocery store chain, Gottwalt's other priorities are ensuring that cities and the state live within their means, and seeing marketplace reforms in areas that need it.