

Designing new solutions

Kalin tries to keep the big picture in mind

By PATTY OSTBERG

At the end of each day Rep. Jeremy Kalin (DFL-Lindstrom) makes a list of adversaries and proponents he needs to call to get to the bottom of legislative issues.



Rep. Jeremy Kalin

A designer/draftsman by trade, Kalin considers himself a coalition builder and prefers to build communities by keeping the big picture in mind. He said it's important to see all sides of the equation.

Kalin uses the state's transportation funding needs to explain his philosophy.

Roads need to be fixed, but the state doesn't have the money to do so. "We have an obligation to come up with possible alternatives," he said. Raising the gas tax could be a possibility, but coming up with several

solutions may be a better approach.

Defeating a two-term incumbent by 1.1 percent of the vote, he attributes the victory to listening, while door knocking, to constituents, working to maintain a positive attitude when discussing hot-button issues and his past coalition-building experience.

For example, in the mid-1990s, when a major utility company was going to build a power line about 20 miles long through the heart of his county, Kalin said he helped organize a citizens group to stop the implementation from taking place.

Kalin said the state needs to put more money into transportation projects. He would like to see an examination of more buses or providing rail service without dramatically changing the area's landscape or character. This issue is especially important because many of his constituents deal with congested roadways while commuting back and forth to the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Most of his

DISTRICT 17B

2002 population: 36,732

Largest city: North Branch

County: Chisago

Top concern: Minnesota's infrastructure

district is a 30- to 45-minute drive from the Capitol.

Other top issues for Kalin include: the local job market, property tax relief and better accountability through testing in schools.

In addition to serving on the Transportation Finance Division and Energy Finance and Policy Division of the House Finance Committee, Kalin serves on the House Governmental Operations, Reform, Technology and Elections Committee and is vice chairman of the House Public Safety and Civil Justice Committee.

He vows to put "people before politics," and has an open-door policy. "I really want every constituent in Chisago County to feel like they can just walk right in ... and bend my ear."