

Wanting coverage for all

Bunn makes health care reform her top priority

By **STEPHEN HARDING**

Between Election Day and the first day of session, Rep. Julie Bunn (DFL-Lake Elmo) was able to take a vacation that included relaxing



Rep. Julie Bunn

on a beach with a good book. Opting against a light, easy read, she paged through "Transforming Public Policy," a book about the strategic use of policy entrepreneurship and innovation in developing public policy. "It was the most exciting book I have recently read. It was so good."

Bunn, who spent four years on the Lake Elmo Planning Commission, said that health care coverage and cost were the most important issues that came up while talking to constituents when she went door-to-door through her district. Among her committee

assignments are the House Health and Human Services Committee and the Health Care and Human Services Division of the House Finance Committee.

"Even though Washington County is one of the wealthiest counties in the state, there are still gaps in [medical] coverage," she said. "From layoffs, divorces and 20-somethings going off their parent's health coverage, people are struggling to pay for insurance."

Health care, in her opinion, is equivalent to the Cold War issue of a previous era. "If we don't solve the problem of skyrocketing health care costs, there will not be enough funds for our schools, transportation systems or clean water."

Bunn, who has a Ph.D in economics from Stanford University, is also troubled with how the state has fulfilled its budgetary needs using one-time funds or accounting shifts.

She is also concerned with schools not receiving a stable source of funding, or enough

DISTRICT 56A
2002 population: 36,812 Largest city: Woodbury County: Washington Top concerns: Health care costs and education funding

to maintain current educational levels. The governor's budget proposal still comes up short, she said. "Four percent a year may not meet the needs, even though we should try to reform schools."

Bunn believes that middle- and lower-income families should not pay a disproportionate share of taxes, and that a fair state tax policy includes closing foreign operating corporation loopholes and going after tax cheaters that cost the state an estimated \$1 billion annually.

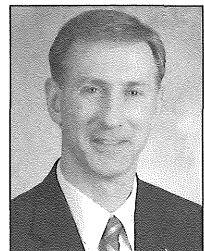
When Bunn is able to grab a moment of free time, she enjoys five-mile outdoor walks and cooking while listening to novels on tape or on her MP3 player.

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.