

Fixing health care

Murphy mixes passions for health care, politics

By **NICK BUSSE**

Ask Rep. Erin Murphy (DFL-St. Paul) why she ran for office, and you're likely to get a very specific answer: "to fix health care."



Rep. Erin Murphy

To be sure, Murphy has other issues on her agenda: education, the environment, global warming, renewable energy, mass transit and civil rights, to name a few.

But for Murphy, a registered nurse and current executive director of the Minnesota Nurses Association, health care is her bread and butter.

"When I door-knocked this summer, what I heard from people was that health care was getting so expensive they're worried they're

going to lose their coverage," Murphy said. "That lack of security is really worrisome to people."

Born and raised in a working-class Wisconsin household, Murphy said she inherited her politics from her parents.

"I grew up in a family that talked politics," she said, adding that she worked on her first political campaign while she was in the eighth grade. (Her candidate won a seat in the Wisconsin State Senate.)

But the idea of entering politics didn't occur to her until much later in life, when she saw how great a role public policy played in her chosen profession.

"When I started studying nursing, I was very content with the idea of working in a hospital and for a few years, didn't even think about politics," Murphy said. "But it doesn't take long to see that the reach of a practicing

DISTRICT 64A

2002 population: 36,752

Largest city: St. Paul

County: Ramsey

Top concern: Health care

nurse ... is limited by policy."

She spent several years lobbying on behalf of the nurses association, and when her predecessor, Rep. Matt Entenza, announced he was stepping down to run for attorney general last year, she knew the time was right to run for office.

Murphy said her No. 1 priority is to work toward universal health care coverage for all Minnesotans — a step she believes is necessary to help control the rising cost of health care.

"If we were able, through policymaking, to put more order to it and stretch the dollars so more people could get covered, then I think we would actually have the leverage to be able to ratchet down costs," she said.