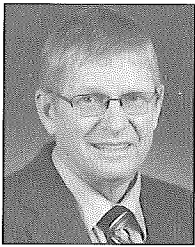


Keeping it local

Anderson wants to help constituents from a different chair

By SONJA HEGMAN

Rep. Paul Anderson (R-Starbuck) is no stranger to the difficulties counties and other local governments face.



Rep. Paul Anderson

Before running for state representative, Anderson was a Pope County commissioner.

“I saw a lot of frustration with how the state deals with local units of government,” he said. “I came to the conclusion that I could

maybe do more for the people back home working on issues down here.”

When former Rep. Bud Heidgerken (R-Freeport) retired, Anderson thought this would be a good opportunity for him to run for office.

His biggest concern is cuts to local government aid. With more than 20 towns

in his district, LGA has become a large part of their budgets. While some towns were exempted from the cuts that have occurred the last few years, Anderson said he’s worried about what might happen this year. “They need some direction pretty soon as to how much they can count on or how much they are going to lose,” he said.

Nursing homes are another concern for Anderson. He has five or six in his district, which are sometimes the biggest employers in smaller towns.

“Our rural nursing homes are really hurting in terms of pay equity and keeping up with inflation,” he said. A local newspaper in his district reported the state took over two nursing homes in rural Minnesota because the facilities were unable to meet their payrolls.

“I know funding is going to be really tight, but I really hope we can somehow find a way to give our nursing home employees some kind of an inflation bump (in their salaries),” he said.

DISTRICT 13A

Population: (2007 est.) 37,567
Largest City: Sauk Centre
Counties: Kandiyohi, Pope, Stearns
Top Concerns: LGA, agriculture, nursing homes, K-12 education

Agriculture is also a passion of Anderson’s. He and his wife, Faith, raise corn, soybeans and wheat. When their three children were young, they had cattle as well, “but when my kids left home, there went my help, so the cattle were gone soon thereafter.”

His son, the Rev. Matt Anderson, who preaches at Calvary Lutheran Church in Golden Valley, is scheduled to be the House chaplain Feb. 9.

The elder Anderson said the state needs to let “our farms and agribusiness do their jobs and maybe pull back on some of the mandates and regulations they face. The ag economy has held up really well. It’s kind of buffering us from some of that national doom and gloom. Sometimes I think that’s forgotten.”