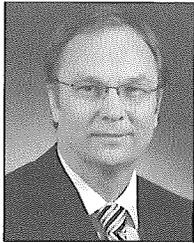


# Altitude adjustment

## Ag and water issues linked for Torkelson

By **SUSAN HEGARTY**

A fourth-generation farmer, Rep. Paul Torkelson's move to St. Paul to serve in the Legislature hasn't been easy, especially living on the 28th floor of a downtown high-rise.



Rep. Paul Torkelson

"It's an adjustment for a country boy to come live in the city. There is no place in Brown, Redwood or Watonwan counties that you could even get to the 28th floor, unless you go up the grain elevator or water tower," said Torkelson (R-Nelson Township).

He's no stranger to adjusting, however. About 20 years ago, he changed careers.

Torkelson earned a degree in instrumental music education from Gustavus Adolphus College, and taught music for a few years before the opportunity arose to live and work

on his great-grandfather's 1878 homestead. He now farms 1,400 acres. Music remains a part of his life; he's the percussionist with a local area band called Attitude.

Torkelson has been interested in agricultural issues for years and recently served as vice president of the Minnesota Farm Bureau. Last March, he completed an 18-month study in the Minnesota Agriculture and Rural Leadership program.

Former district Rep. Brad Finstad (R-Comfrey) hand-picked Torkelson to run for his seat.

"My wife and I sat down and got out the sheet of paper with plus on one side and minus on the other. With my wife's blessing, it all added up to 'Yes, we'll give this a shot,'" he said.

He hopes to be a voice for rural Minnesota and serves on the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs Finance Division.

### DISTRICT 21B

Population: (2007 est.) 35,672

Largest City: New Ulm

Counties: Brown, Redwood, Watonwan

Top Concerns: Agricultural and clean water issues

As a member of the Clean Water Council since its inception in 2006, Torkelson intends to leverage that experience while serving on the House Environment and Natural Resources Finance Division and the House Cultural and Outdoor Resources Finance Division.

"Both of those committees will be working closely with the funds generated by the new constitutional amendment so I hope to have maximum input on how that all comes together, especially the clean water portion of it," Torkelson said.

At the close of the 2009 session, Torkelson is looking forward to riding his 1999 Harley Davidson Road King once again across rural landscape.

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