

From NYC to Minnesota

Business brought Doepke to state, led to public service

By SONJA HEGMAN

Rep. Connie Doepke loves being a legislator.

"I'm thrilled and honored to be here," she said.



Rep. Connie Doepke

The first-term Republican from Orono said she knocked on 7,500 doors in her district after being endorsed in June to replace former Rep. John Berns (R-Wayzata).

Among her committee assignments are seats on the K-12 education finance and policy committees, an ideal fit for someone who has experienced the results of state action in the area.

Before running for legislator, Doepke spent nine years on the Wayzata School Board,

— eight years on the board and one year as a consultant. She had thought about being a legislator because she'd already spent several years in public service and enjoyed it.

"I found that I fell in love with public service," she said. Prior to being on the school board, Doepke spent 20 years working as an executive in the corporate sector.

"Being a working mother is one of the hardest things in the world to do. Being a mother in general is hard," she said. A time came when she needed to be at home more with her children, that's when she devoted her skills to the school district.

Originally from Michigan, a business opportunity with Sears, Roebuck and Co. led Doepke to New York City after college. She worked for several businesses during her 20 years in New York — Avon Products being one — as an executive and an officer. She

DISTRICT 33B
Population: (2007 est.) 37,450 Largest City: Orono County: Hennepin Top concerns: Small business, education, environment

then worked for a small company called New Hampton Inc., before Fingerhut "discovered" her and wooed her to Minnesota in 1993. She worked as Fingerhut's vice president of apparel until 2000.

She hoped to serve on an environment committee this year, but that did not happen. Nonetheless, she still plans to help in the environment area because it is important to her district, which includes part of Lake Minnetonka.

Doepke's father was an environmental scientist for the state of Michigan. "I understand the need to protect our environment for future generations."