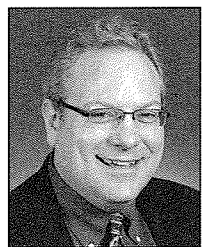


Waiting years for his seat

Sterner looks to prove his bipartisan background

By Mike Cook

Rep. Phil Sterner (DFL-Rosemount) is finally scratching a political itch.



Rep. Phil Sterner

He's always been active in politics, including an internship with former Rep. Howard Knutson, but by age 26 he had four children and knew that being a father came first. However, he remained active in the party.

"I knew I wanted to do this at some point,"

he said.

When former Rep. Dennis Ozment, a Republican, decided to retire after 24 years, Sterner took the chance.

Throughout his campaign, Sterner said he met constituents who told him they had never voted for a DFLer, but they would give

him a try. "Now the pressure's on," he said, smiling.

Part of that is because Ozment did not always vote the Republican party line, rather thinking what was best for his constituents.

"We told people you have to vote for a D instead of an R, but if you like how Dennis did overall, that's what you're getting. You're getting a moderate that's open-minded," Sterner said. "A lot of people took my bipartisan theme and said, 'OK, Sterner, you got two years. Let's see how bipartisan you really are and see what you can do for our district.'"

Sterner, an insurance agency owner, said his community involvement was an asset in his win. In addition to serving on the Rosemount City Council and being active in the chamber of commerce, Sterner has a lifetime of volunteerism experience, including Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, church, youth

DISTRICT 37B

Population: (2007 est.) 45,077

Largest City: Apple Valley

County: Dakota

Top Concern: "Education is real important to the people in my district."

athletics and in the schools where his duties included being a site council president and coordinating a band booklet.

The economy and education rank high among constituent concerns as does green job growth. However, Sterner, whose campaign slogan was "Engaging in a new community conversation about what's best for all," knows neither he nor his colleagues have all the answers.

"I think everybody has a stake in their representative. We want to make sure we're not focusing on a targeted group," he said. "It's not about Phil. It's about what the voters want. ... I need to be open-minded on things."