

A third call to duty

Leidiger says his obligation is 'to right-size government'

By **LEE ANN SCHUTZ**

An American flag propped up in a coffee cup promoting the Tea Party Patriots is prominently displayed atop the file cabinet in the office of Rep. Ernie Leidiger (R-Mayer).



Rep. Ernie Leidiger

It's a reminder, he said, that the growth in government spending is unsustainable. "I'm here to do a duty – to right-size government," he said. He actually terms his foray into politics his "third call to duty." Retired in 1994 from the U.S. Navy after 25 years of service, his obvious "first call" was to serve his country.

While living in San Diego, his "second call" came after the Sept. 11 attacks when the plane taking aim at the Pentagon made

a direct hit on the Navy offices. "These were my classmates," he said. After some soul-searching, he founded the nonprofit Operation Homefront to help meet the needs of military dependents.

Leidiger moved with his wife to Minnesota in 2005 to be closer to extended family. With several past business ventures under his belt, he was ready for a new one with his brother — an office furniture business. But there's one business idea that would be a fulfillment of a dream — opening a brewery.

To beer buffs, the Leidiger name is familiar. For three generations, his family owned and operated Leidiger Brewing Co. in Merrill, Wis. His father was a brewmaster as was his grandfather, who also served in the Wisconsin State Senate.

Leidiger also got serious about politics after moving to Minnesota and became involved with the Republican Party. When

DISTRICT 34A

Population (2009 est.): 48,703

Largest City: Waconia

Counties: Carver, Scott

Top Concerns: Limit size of government, health and human services cost

former Rep. Paul Kohls said he would not seek re-election, Leidiger decided to "throw his hat in the ring."

His view of "out-of-control government spending" includes bonding for capital projects, which he thinks is not selective enough. "Take for example the University (of Minnesota) wants to own a dairy farm to do further research. What is the state getting involved for?"

He is a member of the House Jobs and Economic Development Finance, House Public Safety and Crime Prevention Policy and Finance, House State Government Finance and House Transportation Policy and Finance committees.