

WEST CENTRAL TRIBUNE

WILLMAR, MN  
TUESDAY 16,927  
OCT 5 2004

1200 DW FRONT PAGE

# Repeat race

## Outgoing Republican takes on quiet Democrat in 20B

By Linda Vanderwerf  
Staff Writer

Two years ago, quiet Democrat Lyle Koenen defeated outgoing Republican Colin Berg by just 255



Berg

votes in Minnesota House District 20B.

This year, the two are campaigning again for the seat Koenen has held for the past two years.

Their last contest focused on issues and was a clean, cordial contest. Both

said they expect this year to be no different.

"I think we try to make it issue-based," Berg said. "We have some differences. We also have some things that are very similar."

Negative campaigns don't seem to fit with the area, either, Koenen added. "The people that live out here, I don't think that goes that well," he said.

District 20B covers Renville and Chippewa counties and the eastern half of Yellow Medicine County.

Berg, 46, lives in Olivia and is in the process of starting an agricultural consulting business. Koenen, 48, a farmer, lives in Clara City.

"The numbers are real tight in this district," Koenen said.

"In this district, if we are Democrats or Republicans, a lot of the values are the same," Koenen said.

The most noticeable difference between the candidates is their personal style.

Koenen's personality is on the shy side. Campaigning was difficult for him at first, because he didn't know what to expect, he said.

"It gets easier," he said. "The people that live out here are friendly, and courteous and respectful."

Berg is more outspoken, and he

believes that could be an asset.

"In a rural area you have got to have somebody more outspoken and forceful," he said. "Some people might prefer my opponent's style; I just don't know if it's right



Koenen

for this district."

The candidates' views don't differ that much in some areas. Both consider themselves conservative on social issues like abortion and gay marriage. They label themselves moderates on budget, education and social services issues.

Neither would rule out a tax increase as a way of dealing with a serious budget crisis.

Berg did not sign a no-new-taxes pledge, despite urging by a conservative group. Republican candidates, in particular, receive considerable pressure to sign the pledge, he said.

"Even though I wouldn't prefer to raise taxes," he said, "anytime you eliminate any avenue for balancing the budget, I think that's bad policy."

For Koenen, any tax increase should be aimed at people who earn more than \$500,000 a year, "just to equalize things." People in that income category pay about 8.4 percent of their income in sales, income and property taxes, he said, while people earning \$60,000 or less pay about 12 percent of their income for the same things.

For Koenen, budget cuts of the past two years were unfair to rural areas and low-income people. Local government aid was cut more for rural cities, he said, and cuts in some types of school funding also hit rural districts hard.

"I think some of those cuts were tough," Berg said.

Repeat/ Page A2

## Repeat

Continued from A1

"Were they in the best interests of the state? Maybe not all of them," he said. "We may have to revisit that as money comes available." So, since they agree in some basic ways, what makes

one a Democrat and one a Republican? "The greatest reason has to do with budget issues," Koenen said. He was raised in a family of Democrats, which probably influenced him, too, he said. Budget cuts in the past two years seemed to target young, old and disabled people, people who aren't as able to

defend themselves, he said. "I believe the Democrats are more concerned with fairness in that," he said. "Republicans seem to want to direct the cuts to the wealthy." For Berg, social issues were an important contributing factor in his joining the Republican Party. Two years ago, he attended DFL cau-

ses before committing to the Republicans. His father, Charlie Berg of Chokio, was a long-time state senator who at different times was an independent, a Republican and a Democrat.

"I think because of the position the party takes on social issues," he said. "I've always been able to relate to those positions," he said. "I consider myself to be pro business," he said. "That's generally a position that Republicans have, but I also consider myself to be pro labor." The combination of business and labor is "what made the country what we have today," he said. "They need to continue to work together to move forward."

20B

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# OPINION II

INDEPENDENT-MARSHALL, MINN.  
SATURDAY, SUNDAY  
SEPT. 25-26, 2004

## Candidates on transportation

THIRD OF A SEVEN-WEEK SERIES GIVING LOCAL CANDIDATES FOR THE STATE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES A CHANCE TO RESPOND TO A SINGLE ISSUE EACH WEEK. TODAY'S QUESTION: WHAT CAN YOU OR THE STATE DO TO ADDRESS RURAL TRANSPORTATION CONCERNS?

### HOUSE DISTRICT 20B

#### Colin Berg

Rural transportation concerns come in a number of shapes and sizes.

The transportation concern that immediately comes to mind for rural areas is the need to transport agricultural products efficiently to markets. This requires a variety of channels: gravel roads, highways, rail lines, and waterways. Transportation issues are both state-level and national concerns, especially when discussing issues like the lock and dam systems on the Mississippi River.



BERG  
R-OLIVA

The transportation debate is really an infrastructure debate. Do we as a state and as a country value our ability to transport goods and materials?

This is not solely a rural concern. Traffic bottlenecks in metro areas can cause delays both in and out of terminals. We need to deal with some of these metro traffic problems as if they were our problems — because they are!

In order to keep our roads in reasonable condition, we need to make certain investments. We need to dedicate a larger portion of our financial resources to maintain and improve upon our current circumstances. I support dedicating 100 percent of the Motor Vehicle Sales

Tax (MVST) to our highway system. We should also reconsider the appropriate fees for license tabs. We need to look at bonding to cover the remaining long-term needs of our roads and highways.

One rural transportation issue that can be overlooked is the need for public transportation in rural areas. There are people in rural areas who are not mobile. This would include young people with working parents, special needs citizens, and elderly people. Providing transportation options for these groups enhances their quality of life.

There is a cost to public transportation, but then there is a cost to everything that we do. We need to compare the costs to the benefits. I feel that the benefits of rural public transportation significantly outweigh the costs.

If you'll pardon the pun, those who choose to use the rural public transportation system are not getting a "free ride". They pay an ever-increasing share of the service.

#### Lyle Koenen

Rural Minnesota needs good roads if we expect people to live and work here. Business and farmers must be able to move their production to market and bring in inputs economically. Rural Minnesota may not have the need for six-lane roads, but we do need roads built to handle heavy trucks and safety concerns must be met.



KOENEN  
DFL-MAYNARD

The Transportation Policy Institute's 2003 Minnesota Road Transportation Needs Assessment Study using MnDOT data indicates that it will take \$1.2 billion to maintain current mobility levels each year. Gas tax and tab fees raise \$570 million per year. Transportation funding clearly needs to be addressed soon. The gas tax was last adjusted in 1988 and if adjusted for inflation would be 29.9 cents, instead of the current 20 cents.

Recently, bonding was used to get some road projects going, \$100 million in "2002" and \$400 million in "2003." Bonding, however, is not a long-term solution. For every dollar that gets spent, \$1.50 has to be paid back. Add to debt service the \$400 million advance federal funding (part of "03" bonding) that will have to be paid back, we will be looking at even greater funding shortages in a few years.

I support a gas tax increase, but to avoid sticker shock I propose a gas tax increase of 3 cents for each of the next three years for a total of 9 cents to bring the level up to 29 cents which is very close to covering the inflation factor since 1988.

License tab fees may also have to be looked at again, not for existing vehicles, but for new purchases from this point forward. This will give owners the ability to plan and budget. Also, I would like to see a higher percentage of the Minnesota vehicle sales tax distribution go toward roads.

Along with roads, we must not forget to adequately fund rural transit for the elderly, handicapped, and the working poor that have no other way to get to work.



# Candidates on economy

20B

FIFTH OF A SEVEN-WEEK SERIES GIVING LOCAL CANDIDATES FOR THE STATE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES A CHANCE TO RESPOND TO A SINGLE ISSUE EACH WEEK. TODAY'S QUESTION: WHAT KIND OF THINGS CAN BE DONE TO IMPROVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTHWEST MINNESOTA?

INDEPENDENT-MARSHALL, MINN.

SATURDAY, SUNDAY

OCT. 9-10, 2004

## HOUSE DISTRICT 20B

### Colin Berg

A good approach to economic development is to build upon your strengths. One of the great strengths of southwest Minnesota is production agriculture.

Although crop production flourishes in our geographic area, animal agriculture has lagged. This is especially true in dairy and beef production.

Based on Census of Agriculture figures, the number of dairy cows in Minnesota has dropped by over 40 percent from 1974 to 2002. This is a loss of almost 350,000 dairy cows since 1974. In other terms, it is an average loss of over 1,000 head per month, every month, for 28 years.



BERG  
R-OLIVIA

If we take those 350,000 dairy cows and multiply them by \$2,500 in receipts per cow, we would show an additional \$875 million in gross revenue from an expanded dairy program in Minnesota. This is only calculating direct income from the added cows. We haven't addressed the additional economic impact of hauling, processing, or marketing the milk.

Another ag-related opportunity for economic growth is the renewable fuels industry. Corn processing plants are springing up all over Minnesota, creating jobs, raising local corn

prices, and lessening our dependence on foreign oil, all of which have positive economic impacts in our communities.

Bio-diesel is still in its infancy in Minnesota, but should gain ground quickly once the state and Federal governmental policies kick in. There are currently four different plants being proposed, all in rural areas.

Yet another opportunity for economic growth is to exploit the entrepreneurial spirit and promote the work ethic that we have in rural areas. The state government has established JOBZ zones across the state. Now we need to attract new business to these zones, especially to Western Minnesota. These businesses create jobs, the jobs help us retain families within our communities and attract new families. The families add to our schools, churches, and community organizations.

What kinds of businesses do we want in western Minnesota? We can't afford to be too selective. We need small businesses, large businesses, and everything in between. A few large manufacturing businesses would create lots of jobs. Smaller businesses create fewer jobs, but add to the overall economy.

One last option for economic development that we must not overlook is tourism. We have recreational opportunities on our lakes, rivers, camp grounds, and bike trails. Our summers are filled with community events. In the fall, Western Minnesota is very popular with hunters. Let's find a way to capitalize on these resources.

We also have real potential for agricultural tourism. We have unique agricultural businesses that are in demand by tour groups. Western Minnesota also has a significant number of research firms that deal with advanced agricultural seed technologies.

To address the need for meeting facilities for large groups, an Ag Innovation Center was proposed for Olivia and was included in bonding bills in two consecutive years. Although the bonding bills for the Center passed both legislative houses, the bills were both vetoed by then Gov. Ventura.

### Lyle Koenen

One of the most successful economic development things done for rural Minnesota has been the development of the ethanol industry. It brings better corn prices, good jobs, and clean burning fuel. I was sorry that the majority of legislators voted to cut ethanol funding. Looking into the future, there is a lot of potential for energy production in rural Minnesota. I support continued

expansion of ethanol and believe we need to step up our efforts in bio-diesel, wind, bio-mass and hydrogen. All of these energy sources can bring a lot of economic activity to rural Minnesota if the development starts here and starts early.



KOENEN  
DFL-MAYNARD

I would like to see the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) direct a fair share of available money to rural Minnesota. An example would be the Small Cities grant, with the bulk of the money going to the metro area and to the large regional centers. This is a fairness issue, would not increase state spending, and would aid rural communities.

The DEED/Job Service layoffs in many of our area offices is also a concern. Jobs are very important if we want people to continue to live here. This layoff is shortsighted and does not keep a positive focus on the future. Keep the Job Service offices fully staffed.

In the "03" session Minnesota Technology funding was eliminated. Minnesota Technology is on its own to find funding sources. Its role in rural Minnesota was to help manufacturers use appropriate technologies to improve efficiencies and create jobs. Restoring funding would be helpful.

The Agriculture Utilization Research Institute (AURI) is a state-funded non-profit that promotes and develops value-added agricultural products. AURI's funding was cut by 57 percent in 2003. To get AURI up to speed again, its funding needs to be restored as quickly as possible. Anything we can do to add value to our farm products keeps more profit and jobs here in rural Minnesota.

We must stop rewarding companies who export our jobs to foreign countries. Many of these corporations pay little or no tax.

The state of Minnesota's contracts should also require that both professional and non-professional services be performed only by people in this country, citizens or individuals legally authorized to work here.



# Growth Alliance looking for strength in numbers

By Tom Cherveney  
Staff Writer

WILLMAR — With a population of more than 86,000, Duluth gets heard in the state capitol, and always receives a share of state dollars for economic development because of it.

With a population of more than 150,000, the 10 counties comprising the West Central Growth Alliance in west central Minnesota would like to do the same.

They're feeling left out right now, but believe they can turn things around by working as a region, leaders of the 3½-year-old alliance for economic growth told an audience of just over 100 on Monday night in Willmar.

"We do need to start thinking more regionally," said Rep. Al Juhnke, DFL-Willmar, one of five area legislators who participated in the event.

Formed in the fall of 2000 to promote what is now the FibroMinn project, the Growth Alliance has since focused on economic development issues for the region.

It has met its setbacks. Gov. Jesse Ventura "unallotted" a \$75,000 state grant the group was relying on for a marketing campaign to attract new businesses. The 10 counties (see map) have also been hit hard by state cuts to local government aid.

The total LGA loss to the 10 coun-

ties is \$6,249,375, or a per-capita loss of \$39.54, said Dave Bovee, Dawson city administrator and WCGA board member. He and other WCGA members will be urging state legislators to reinstate local government aid monies to the region as part of the group's 2004 legislative agenda.

The group is also seeking a more level playing field when it comes to competing with Duluth and other heavyweights in the battle for state economic development dollars. The alliance will be urging the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development to create an advisory committee to advise

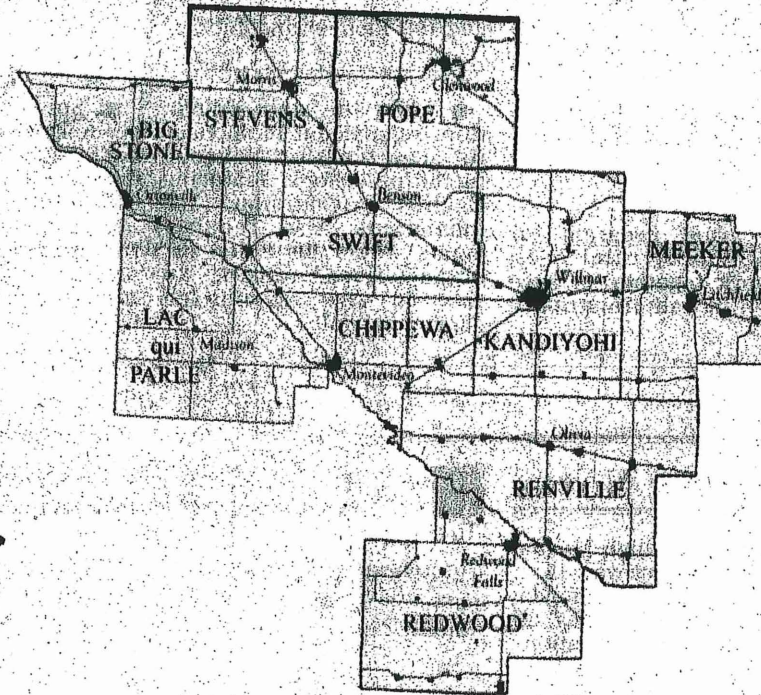
the state "about the reality of economic development outside of St. Paul," according to alliance members.

The group is also looking for the state to more than replenish the dollars it sought for marketing. Joe Egge, WCGA board member and Meeker County economic development director, said the group would like \$150,000 in state funding in each of the next three years. It is no different than the allocations the state already makes to Duluth, the Iron Range, and some of the state's large metro areas, he told the group.

The WCGA's legislative agenda also seeks to eliminate what the group sees as a burdensome paperwork requirement. The state's business subsidy law now requires economic development agencies to file annual reports on loans they make to businesses. The information is readily available at the local level. The state requirement adds unneeded paperwork and expense, according to Sue Pirsig, WCGA board member and Swift County economic development director.

She and other WCGA members would also like to see the state adopt a rural Catch Up Program that would provide a tax credit of up to \$5,000 per year per job created.

Alliance/ Page A2 B



WEST CENTRAL TRIBUNE

WILLMAR, MN  
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## Alliance

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Legislators and local officials from the communities and townships in the 10 counties emphasized their support for more regional cooperation, and the economic development agenda of the organization.

Legislators cautioned the group that

the prospects of seeing local government aids restored or obtaining other state dollars in their place are not good. While he'd like to see the group take a run at its agenda in St. Paul, Sen. Steve Dille, R-Dassel, said it will be very difficult to find state funding.

"Anything having to do with money is going to be tough," said Rep. Dean Urdahl, R-Grove City.

"Dollars will be scarce," said Rep. Marty Seifert, R-Marshall, in agree-

ment. He urged the alliance to work as a region and be ready to play both "offense and defense" in the capitol. The region will need to pull together without respect to party loyalties when proposals that threaten the area are raised, such as one urging the state to consider closing post secondary institutions, he explained.

"Politics seems to be over riding policy," said Juhnke, of Willmar. "We can be the leaders in West Central Min-

nesota in bringing back policy in over riding politics."

If the WCGA can speak for the entire region, it might even do more. Rep. Lyle Koenen, DFL-Maynard, said it is difficult for the small communities of the region with 2,000 or 3,000 people to have their voices heard in St. Paul. A regional group speaking for more than 150,000 can make some noise. "If you come with people like that, it starts to mean something," said the legislator.

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## EDITORIAL

# Getting an early read on local elections

The 2004 campaign season isn't just about the presidency. Plenty of local races will be on the ballot this fall, too. And, already, local political insiders are trying to figure out who might be running in November.

One thing's for sure: There will be at least one rematch of a 2002 legislative race, while other legislative races, so far, are not so defined.

The rematch: Republican Colin Berg will run again against state Rep. Lyle Koenen, DFL-Maynard. Koenen defeated Berg in 2002 in the District 20B House race. The district includes part of Yellow Medicine County.

Berg's family confirmed Monday that he's planning to run against Koenen again. Berg is the son of longtime state Sen. Charlie Berg.

But in other area House races, so far, the incumbents are standing alone.

- District 20A: Rep. Aaron Peterson, DFL-Madison, is the incumbent. His Republican challenger from 2002, Jeff Moen of Hendricks, probably won't run this year, his family said.

- District 21A: Rep. Marty Seifert, R-Marshall, is the incumbent after another lopsided victory in 2002.

There had been some mention in Marshall in the last month that Southwest Minnesota State professor, Joseph Diaz, might run against Seifert.

But when asked directly about the race last week, Diaz said he was not running. He considered entering the campaign, but is going to spend the summer in Europe as a visiting professor.

"We will be back at the start of the school year, but I don't think it's a good idea to be out of the U.S. for such a long period in the middle and towards the end of the election season," Diaz said. "I know that I, as a voter, would have a problem with a candidate who wasn't even in the country during the campaign, so I notified the state leaders that I was declining their support for that reason and decided not to run this term."

Diaz, who has drawn national attention because of his book about witnessing an execution in Florida, didn't rule out future campaigns, though.

"It was a very tough decision because of the support that we were shown by people in the community and at the state level," he said. "But I'm young (32 years old) and plan to have a long political life..."

- District 22A: Rep. Doug Magnus, R-Slayton, unseated longtime lawmaker Ted Winter of Fulda in 2002. Winter is not planning on a rematch, according to his 2002 campaign: He's started a new business and would not have time to run against Magnus this year.

INDEPENDENT

MARSHALL, MN  
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According to the state Campaign Finance Board, no other candidates have filed against incumbents in those House races, either.

While there are still many months before the November election, time is, in some ways, running short for candidates hoping to make a serious run at the House this year — especially against incumbents who'll get more media attention in coming weeks as the legislative session begins.

Tony Doom of Marshall, one of the leaders of the local DFL party, said DFL officials are working on finding candidates for local races.

There is always a need for contested races, because they tend to bring much more focus on issues of importance to the area — especially when candidates square off in debates over those issues.

And that's particularly true, now. As we've said several times, this is a pivotal year for rural Minnesota. How will St. Paul treat an area that certainly was a loser in last year's legislative session, and do candidates or incumbents have ideas on how to improve the area's status in St. Paul?

There's one other race of potential major local impact this fall, too: U.S. Rep. Collin Peterson, DFL-Minn., is up for re-election. Peterson, of Detroit Lakes, represents the 7th Congressional District, which includes Marshall and Lyon County.

David Sturrock, the Marshall city councilman and SMSU professor, has said he is considering a challenge to Peterson. If so, it will be an interesting — if not, perhaps — an uphill challenge. Peterson handily won the race in 2002, and has been an elected official for 22 years. Will Sturrock be able to generate interest and support in a district that's one of the largest, geographically, in the country?

On the other hand, Sturrock is a knowledgeable political scientist with a deep interest in policy. If he runs, that, too, could make for some compelling debates between Sturrock and Peterson.

The campaign season is under way. Let's hope good, committed candidates emerge over coming weeks and months.





Some of the cards include (left to right), Rep. Aaron Peterson, Madison; Rep. Lyle Koenen, Maynard; Sen. Dennis Frederickson, New Ulm; Rep. Marty Seifert, Marshall; and Sen. Jim Vickerman, Tracy.

# A Stacked deck

## Minnesota legislators featured on a new deck of playing cards

By RAE KRUGER  
Independent Staff Writer

MARSHALL — It's not quite a Wheaties box but Minnesota legislators now have their faces imprinted on four sets of playing cards being passed out by the Minnesota Credit Union Network.

"We're getting a deluge of calls from legislators wanting additional decks for their families," said Kevin Chandler, the president and chief executive officer of the Minnesota Credit Union Network.

"I think they are \$3.99 a deck so they are reasonably priced," said Rep. Marty Seifert, R-Marshall.

Seifert, the District 21A representative, is the Queen of Spades.

"The same suit as the governor which is probably correct," Seifert said.

Governor Tim Pawlenty is the Ace of Spades.

"It's kind of neat," Seifert said of the playing cards. The Spades is the most common suit for legislators in

DECK PAGE 9A C

## DECK FROM PAGE 1A C

this region and it's a pretty good hand with Sen. Gary Kubly, DFL-Granite Falls as the eight of Spades, Rep. Aaron Peterson, DFL-Madison, the nine, Rep. Lyle Koenen, DFL-Maynard, the 10, Sen. Dennis Frederickson, R-New Ulm, the Jack, Seifert the Queen and Rep. Brad Finstad, R-New Ulm, the King.

There are two diamonds in the deck. Rep. Doug Magnus, R-Slayton is the two of Diamonds and Sen. Jim Vickerman, DFL-Tracy, is the Ace.

"We didn't want to be involved in the business of determining who went on what

card," Chandler said. The credit network submitted the photos and the information to the company who determine the suit and order of the cards, Chandler said.

"We kind of got the idea from an article New York Times about a deck of cards with all the members of the (President George W.) Bush administration," Chandler said. "We came up with the idea about a year ago but couldn't get it out in time for the last session. We kept it real quiet."

The cards were passed out at the Capitol on Monday.

"It did cause quite a buzz at the

Capitol," Seifert said.

"Some legislators play cards at night so it's appropriate," Seifert said.

Chandler said the cards have given legislators the chance to talk informally. Without the franking privileges, legislators don't informally see each other as much, Chandler said.

The cards also serve a practical purpose—they are a way for legislators to learn the names and faces of other legislators, Chandler said.

Seifert figures the cards will become collector's items.

INDEPENDENT

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INDEPENDENT

MARSHALL, MN  
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**HeadStart visits Capitol**



Area residents involved with Prairie 5 HeadStart recently visited the state Capitol. During their trip to St. Paul, the group met with local legislators. Pictured, front row, from left are: state Rep. Aaron Peterson, DFL-Madison, Anne Smith of Maynard, Rachel Rekedal of Marshall, Barb Ludvigson of Madison and state Rep. Lyle Koenen, DFL- Maynard. Middle row: Sen. Gary Kubly, DFL-Granite Falls, Paula Boike of Maynard and Meghan Reiman of Kandiyohi. Back row: Kathie Grube of Marietta, Robert Heim of Benson and Randy Schuerman of Appleton. Not pictured: Jodi Heidecke of Montevideo. Kubly said he was pleased the group came to the Capitol to show their support for HeadStart.



Election 2004

Minnesota Legislature

# Parties pin hopes on House races

Both seek control, putting pressure on all campaigns.

STAR TRIBUNE AUG 15 '04  
By Conrad deFiebre and Dane Smith  
Star Tribune Staff Writers

It's only mid-August, and already Republican voters in the meatpacking town of Austin, Minn., say they are getting phone calls asking whether they know that first-term GOP state Rep. Jeff Anderson voted against increased spending on early childhood programs and regulations aimed at curbing crib death.

Anderson's DFL Party challenger, Jeanne Poppe, says she is being unfairly popped by Republican House Speaker Steve Sviggum for giving away popsicles.

Two years after the Republican election romp of 2002 swamped traditional DFL strongholds such as Austin, the fight for control of the Minnesota House is on.

Though overshadowed by a barnburner of a presidential contest this year, the House elections still stand out as the only partisan state government races on the Nov. 2 ballot. It's consuming much of the money and energy of interest groups and party workers, in part because neither the DFL-controlled Minnesota Senate nor statewide offices of governor or the U.S. Senate will be up for election until 2006.

House Republicans enjoy a majority of 81 to 53, their biggest margin in more than 30 years. DFLers would have to pick up 15 seats to regain the control they lost in 1998, and that appears to be an uphill battle of mountainous proportions.

"Although a Democratic surge that would put them in the majority seems remote, the size of the Republican majority is vulnerable," University of Minnesota political science Prof. Larry Jacobs said. Among the factors cited by Jacobs that are likely to lead to at least some DFL gains:

➤ Of the 11 House seats decided by 5 percentage points or fewer in 2002, Republicans won 10 of them.

➤ Of the 11 open seats this year, 10 currently belong to retiring GOP members.

HOUSE continues on B6:

— A look at the 10 most hotly contested races.  
— Complaints about campaign tactics are beginning early.

## AN OPENING FOR THE DFL?

The DFL could make gains, says political science Prof. Larry Jacobs:

➤ Republicans won 10 of the 11 House seats won by 5 percentage points or fewer in 2002.

➤ 10 of the 11 open seats belong to retiring GOP members.

➤ First-term legislators are vulnerable.

## HOUSE from B1 Leaders trade their complaints over tactics

➤ The Republican sweep produced the largest class of first-term legislators in 30 years, and the most vulnerable election for legislators tends to be their second, before they get established.

Republican strategists contend that they will lose no more than three to five seats, if any. The GOP also is fielding aggressive campaigns against several vulnerable DFLers, some of them first-termers.

Sviggum, R-Kenyon, said he is focusing resources — a hoped-for \$1 million in field-staff efforts and advertising — on about two dozen of the 134 House races.

The targeted swing districts are evenly split between DFL and Republican incumbents.

Sviggum is getting to be the stuff of legend for his acumen at recruiting candidates and setting strategy. He engineered the 1998 GOP House takeover after almost three decades of DFL control, and he has added to the Republican margin in each election since then.

The GOP pitch to voters, he said, is that Republicans have "managed the state budget with the right priorities and hope for the future — while not raising taxes on families."

It's an upbeat message that, even though many cuts went into a \$4.5 billion budget fix, the cuts mostly avoided schools, nursing homes and the disabled, Sviggum said. And it stresses Republican plans for new spending on all-day kindergarten, the environment and jobs once rosier fiscal times return.

For his southern Minnesota constituents, Anderson, 36, is adding his support for a crackdown on the methamphetamine trade plaguing rural Minnesota combined with new treatment resources for addicts. "It's a big issue down here," he said.

As for the alleged telephone attacks on him — a common strategy known as "push-polling," in which political operatives pose as unbiased survey takers — Anderson said he won't respond in kind.

"It usually leads to attack ads later on, but I don't think negative campaigning is going to work in this district," he said. "It's an unethical practice I won't be involved in."

## DFL view

Poppe and House Minority Leader Matt Entenza, DFL-St. Paul, deny that they are push-polling.

"My suspicion is the Republicans or some rogue group is doing it," Poppe said. "I heard they even mispronounced my name [it's 'Poppy']. We're not saying anything about Mr. Anderson. That's one of the first rules: Don't mention your opponent's name."

Poppe, however, objects to a stern letter that she received in June from Sviggum accusing her of felony violations of campaign law for her series of 20 events called "Popsicles in the Park with Poppe."

Sviggum's letter quoted state law prohibiting gifts of food or other items as part of election campaigns. It omitted another clause of the law exempting refreshments "of nominal value."

In an interview, Sviggum stood by the letter, although he has no plans to press the issue further.

Poppe said most of her popsicles went to children too young to vote anyway.

According to Entenza, Sviggum is "making up issues because he's not doing very well." The push-polling allegations, Entenza added, are "probably just standard voter-identification calls."

Entenza said DFLers are calling for bipartisan efforts in education, health care and transportation rather than the GOP's "my-way-or-the-highway" approach, which he blamed for this year's legislative gridlock. He also hopes to raise \$1 million for targeted campaigns in at least 15 districts — enough to win back the majority.

*"I'm not going to predict we'll be in the majority. But I think it's an anti-incumbent year. People are going to be voting for some change, and that means DFL."*

— Matt Entenza,  
House minority leader

(over)



"I think we'll make very substantial gains," he said. "I'm not going to predict we'll be in the majority. But I think it's an anti-incumbent year. People are going to be voting for some change, and that means DFL."

## Payback time?

Not to be discounted will be Minnesota's smaller "major" political parties, the Independence and the Green, which have been more competitive in Minnesota legislative races than in most other states.

Tim Penny, the former congressman and IP gubernatorial candidate in 2002, said that as many as five or six of the party's 21 legislative candidates may have a decent chance of winning. On Minnesota Public Radio last week, Penny urged listeners to vote against incumbents in both dominant parties to register their disapproval of the 2004 legislative meltdown, in which DFL and Republican leaders failed to reach compromise even on legislation that both wanted, such as a bonding bill for state capital investment projects.

Penny said IP leaders and candidates will emphasize that voters should impose a "burden of proof on every incumbent to explain how they're not part of the problem."

Although neither the IP nor the Green Party has actually

elected a legislator other than an incumbent convert from the DFL or GOP, Jacobs' analysis shows that so-called "third parties" have performed better in Minnesota than in surrounding states. In 2002, the other parties in Minnesota got at least 2 percent of the vote in 31 percent of House races.

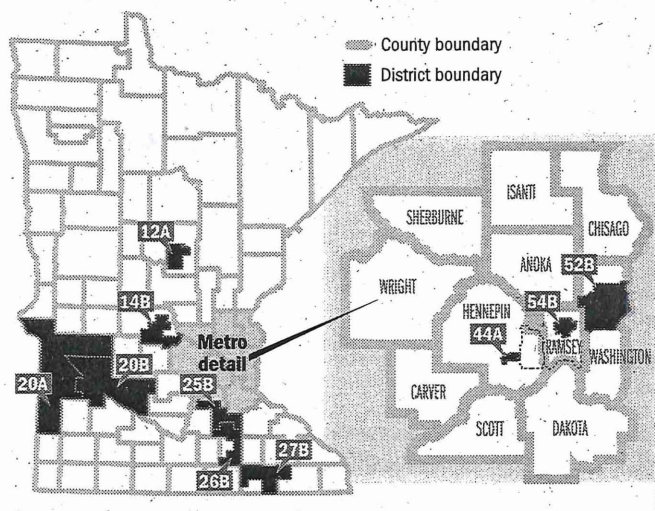
Moreover, more than a dozen of the other-party candidates in Minnesota hit double digits in 2002, and five got more votes than the winner's margin of victory, possibly influencing the outcome, Jacobs said.

The final outcome depends in part on forces beyond the control of candidates and caucus leaders. A big factor is the impact of mass mailings by independent interest groups such as the teachers union and various liberal-labor groups for the DFLers, and social conservatives and business interests for the Republicans.

Sometimes those groups will hit a theme that resonates unexpectedly with voters, and sometimes their messages backfire.

Gregg Peppin, a top Republican caucus assistant, said, "The attack mail usually begins in October, and you just never know which direction the independent expenditures will take things."

*The writers are at  
cdefiebre@startribune.com  
and rdsmith@startribune.com.*



## 10 hot House races

**District 12A, Brainerd area:** DFLer Don Samuelson, a 32-year veteran of the Legislature who narrowly lost his Senate seat in 2002, is attempting a comeback to an open House seat vacated by Republican Dale Walz. Samuelson's GOP opponent will be Paul Gazelka, a well-known insurance agent. Samuelson's name is big, but the district has become increasingly conservative as affluent citizens retire to the popular lakes area.

**District 14B, west of St. Cloud:** Seat vacated by Republican Doug Stang. DFLer Larry Hosch, mayor of St. Joseph, a roofer and bartender, is up against Republican Jim Derosé, a resort and hotel owner and music teacher.

**District 20A, Upper Minnesota River Valley:** First-term DFLer Aaron Peterson, son and grandson of DFL House members, is up against Jeff Moen, a former school board member and auto salesman. The GOP acknowledges a DFL advantage in the district, but says the youngest Peterson has deviated from his forebears in voting more liberally on guns and abortion.

**District 20B, Upper Minnesota River Valley:** DFL first-termer Lyle Koenen, a dairy truck driver, won by only about 250 votes in 2002 over Republican Colin Berg, a county farm management instructor, son of former state Sen. Charlie Berg. Rematch underway.

**District 25B, Northfield, southern exurbs:** Republican first-termer Ray Cox, a building contractor, is up for a rematch against DFLer David Bly, a high-school teacher, who lost by just 20 votes in 2002. Northfield's two college campuses provide DFL votes, but the northern reaches of the district are filling in with presumably more conservative suburban voters.

**District 26B, Faribault and southern farm area:** Veteran Republican Lynda Boudreau, a lead supporter of 2003 concealed-carry law supported by gun enthusiasts, won with just 52 percent over DFLer Patti Fritz, a nurse with 30 years of experience. A rematch is underway and DFLers say Fritz snuck up on Boudreau last time and never stopped running. GOP strategists say redistricting caused the 2002 dip but that Boudreau has strengthened her ties to the district. The Independence Party has a potentially competitive candidate in Medford City Council Member Mike Corbin.

**District 27B, Austin area:** Traditionally this meat-packing center has been DFL territory, but Republican first-termer Jeff Anderson, a teacher, pulled off an upset in 2002, defeating DFLer Jean Poppe, a college career counselor, for what was then an open seat. It's Anderson-Poppe in another heated rematch.

**District 44A, St. Louis Park and Hopkins:** This inner-ring suburb long has been competitive and it's now held by veteran Jim Rhodes, a moderate Republican. DFLers are running Steve Simon, an attorney. Rhodes won by only 2 percentage points in 2002 in a district that appears to be growing more liberal and DFL.

**District 52B, Stillwater area:** This is a grudge rematch following a special election upset victory a year ago by DFLer Rebecca Otto, a teacher and former school board member, who was accused by GOP opponent Matt Dean, an architect, of false campaign charges. A grand jury indicted her, but a judge threw out the charges. The district is strongly suburban and Republican — Otto lost the 2002 general election to Republican former Rep. Mark Holsten by 3,655 votes — but DFLers claim she won the special election in a backlash against GOP budget cuts.

**District 54B, Little Canada, northeast suburban area:** An open seat pits DFLer Bev Scalze, owner of a heating and cooling business and a Little Canada council member, against Ryan Griffin, a Little Canada attorney who has been active in youth hockey, who has the backing of the Little Canada mayor. Scalze lost by just 2 percentage points in 2002 to Republican Carl Jacobson, who is not running this year.

Compiled from lists of top-priority races provided by DFL and Republican House caucuses and from a list of closest races in the 2002 election provided by Larry Jacobs, director of the 2004 Elections Project at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs.

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# Voters' asking lawmakers about special session

By Linda Vanderwerf  
Staff Writer

State Sen. Steve Dille's constituents have "a polite level of dissatisfaction" about the Legislature's 2004 session.

"Our failure to get the job done is troubling to the public," said Dille, R-Dassel.

However, Dille and other west central Minnesota lawmakers contacted this week said constituents haven't had much to say about the session.

The session ended May 16, just before a deadline imposed by the state constitution. The Legislature closed without agreement on major legislation, including a state bonding bill or a plan for tougher sentences for sex offenders.

## Special session

The number one question he hears is "is there going to be a special session," said Rep. Al Juhnke, DFL-Willmar.

Talk of a special session started before lawmakers left the Capitol, but disagreement over a possible agenda had stalled talks until Friday.

Legislative leaders met Friday afternoon for new discussions after Gov. Tim Pawlenty agreed to back off some of his requirements for a special session.

"I think the people generally want us to pass a bonding bill, and I think they want better accountability with sexual predators," Johnson said.

Many constituents and other legislators have suggested a one-day special session with a limited agenda, he said.

"Hopefully if there is one, we won't have a bunch of side issues," said Rep. Aaron Peterson, DFL-Madison.

Several legislators said they were hoping to see a special session soon.

"I think we have to" so a bonding bill can be passed, Dille said.

A bonding bill could provide thousands of construction jobs across the state, Juhnke said.

The bonding bill included several projects for the area including tornado relief for Buffalo Lake and flood relief for Montevideo and Granite Falls. Money for the new airport in Willmar was in the bill. It also included bridge projects and improvements for college campuses statewide.

"If there were a special session, the most comments I've heard are 'do something about a Twins stadium,'" said Rep. Dean Urdahl, R-Grove City. Urdahl, an author of books about sports and the Twins, said he'd heard that comment from a number of people, "not just in ballparks."

Rep. Lyle Koenen, DFL-Maynard, said he also hears from people about a stadium. His constituents tend to urge him to support it, he said.

## Unfinished business

A recent Pioneer Press-Minnesota Public Radio poll indicated that Minnesotans generally have a low opinion of the Legislature but not of their own legislators. The response from area legislators would seem to bear that out.

"I expected a real chewing out, and it didn't happen," Koenen said.

Legislators said they encountered some angry constituents, but that was the minority in the three weeks since the Legislature adjourned.

Peterson planned a string of town meetings throughout his district this week. He found, to his surprise, that people really didn't seem to want to talk about the session.

At DeToy's Café in Benson, Peterson spoke with Dale Tolifson, chairman of the Chippewa Valley Ethanol Cooperative.

Tolifson talked about ethanol legislation and the importance of encouraging the development of value-added agricultural products.

"I was pretty disappointed we were only two votes short on the bonding bill in the Senate," Peterson said. If the bill had passed in the Senate, a compromise bill could have been sent to the governor, he said.

"I was really disappointed in the things that didn't get done," Tolifson said of the session.

"There's a lot of important things not happening that should be happening," he said. "It takes a team effort. ... I'm not going to blame my local people, because it takes more than one."

Urdahl said he does get some questions from his constituents.

"A general comment is — how come you didn't get anything done," he said. "I remind people we actually passed more bills than last year."



Rep. Aaron Peterson, right, visits Tuesday with Allen Anderson of rural Kerkhoven at Sherrie's Café in Kerkhoven.

New graduation standards, a lower blood alcohol limit for drunken driving offenses and dairy legislation are included in the list, he said. Urdahl's district will see a new state park.

For Johnson comments have been more personal in nature.

Avonelle Johnson, his wife, has been undergoing cancer treatments. Constituents frequently say, "You and Avonelle hang in there," he said.

People also seem preoccupied with graduation, fishing and the rain lately, he said, but when the talk turns to pol-

itics, people ask what went wrong and say they do not like the "partisan bickering" they saw during the session.

The list of issues people would like to see addressed isn't short, the legislators said.

Other issues brought up include Medical Assistance liens on life estates, local government funding, nursing homes, school funding, dairy regulations and renewable energy.

On some issues, a lack of compromise led to bills that some legislators couldn't support, said Sen. Gary Kubly, DFL-Granite Falls.

WEST CENTRAL TRIBUNE

WILLMAR, MN  
SATURDAY 16, 927  
JUN 5 2004

Tribune photo by Bill Zimmer

"Rural areas got hammered pretty hard (last year), and I didn't want that to happen again," he said. "I think people are sometimes surprised to find that I'm frustrated, too."

Rep. Bud Heidgerken, R-Freepoint, said his constituents express their frustration by suggesting it may be time for term limits.

"A lot of people making the decisions have been there a long time," he said. "I'm not going to mention any names, but it comes from both sides of the aisle. ... I think that would take care of some of the animosities."

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## WEST CENTRAL TRIBUNE

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### REGIONAL MEETING

#### **BOLD Board meets with legislators**

BIRD ISLAND — BOLD School Board members urged their local legislators Monday to consider some relief for school districts strapped for capital improvements.

The current formula has resulted in dwindling dollars for capital expenses such as building repairs, said Howard Caldwell, BOLD superintendent. "There's only a limited amount of dollars that have been identified in the funding process for capital improvements."

Some projects, such as roof replacement, can be so expensive as to leave school districts without funds to pay for any other improvements, he said.

At a meeting Monday with Sen. Gary Kubly, DFL-Granite Falls, and Rep. Lyle Koenen, DFL-Clara City, board members suggested allowing a discretionary levy that school boards could turn to for help with capital expenses. They told the legislators that the process needed to be equitable, however, so smaller school districts aren't at a disadvantage.

The discussion with the two state legislators also included a review of the upcoming legislative session and issues with education funding.

In other business Monday, Sandra Gay was sworn in as the board's newest member. She fills a vacancy that expires at the end of 2005. Margaret Flemming, who resigned from the board to take a position with the school district, also was recognized with a Minnesota School Boards Association Director's Award.

The board also:

- Reviewed and accepted the 2004 fiscal year audit, which shows the BOLD School District's budget in the black.

- Decided to seek more information about what it might take to upgrade the elementary swimming pool in Bird Island. The pool is aging and has been closed because it doesn't meet safety codes. School board members want to evaluate the cost and extent of fixing it before making a decision. They also plan to study data on how many students use the pool and how often.

- Approved a property tax levy of \$816,824.83, the maximum allowed.

— Anne Polta



# House members see cooperation in their future

By Linda Vanderwerf  
Staff Writer

While Republicans were celebrating nationwide Tuesday night, Minnesota Democrats stacked up significant gains in the state House of Representatives. House Republicans sank from an 81-53 majority to a much slimmer split of 68 Republicans to 66 DFL legislators.



Peterson

the grassroots network. I think we found that out last night."

Area legislators of both parties said House members will need to find ways to cooperate in 2005. They also said they thought House Speaker Steve Sviggum, R-Kenyon, would maintain his office, despite the losses of his caucus.



Koenen

With a 28-vote majority, House Republicans "did what they wanted to when they wanted to" for the past two years, said Rep. Lyle Koenen, DFL-Clara City.

Those days are over, the lawmakers said. Since it takes 68 votes to pass a bill, the Republicans are likely to need minority votes quite often.

As Rep. Al Juhnke, DFL-Willmar, put it, Republicans have the majority "if everyone's in their seats, if no one is sick, if no one is in the bathroom."

The shift of 13 House seats from Republican to DFL hands was "a warning shot over the bow" for legislators, Juhnke said.

"We better learn to work with each other, learn to work for the common good of the state," Juhnke said. "I think the people are saying, 'We've had enough.'"



Juhnke

Increased cooperation "may be one of the best things to come out of a situation that is not good for Republicans," said Rep. Dean Urdahl, R-Grove City.

"Perhaps we will see more banding together of rural members, regardless of party," he said.

In fact, several lawmakers said they felt the new House might do more for rural areas.

Rural legislators have said many cuts made in the 2003 state budget hit rural areas unfairly.

"We cannot be ignored any-

more," Peterson said. "The DFL House will no longer be rolled over by suburban Republicans."

Peterson and Koenen, returning to St. Paul for their second terms, said they would enjoy having a new playing field.

In his first session, DFL legislators were so outnumbered on committees that "we almost felt like spectators," as leaders decided what bills to hear and when to hear them, Koenen said.



Urdahl

The number of seats lost surprised many people, including Republican Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

Pawlenty said his issues and priorities wouldn't change, but that the narrower edge would force the sides to be more civil to each other. "The results don't change the way we govern," he maintained.

Cooperation/ Page A2

WEST CENTRAL TRIBUNE

WILLMAR, MN  
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## Cooperation

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Pawlenty's conservative agenda could take a hit in dealing with a DFL Senate and the closely divided House, Juhnke said.

"I know he does have a moderate side buried in there somewhere," said Juhnke, who served in the House with Pawlenty for three terms.

"It's going to take cooperation from

all four caucus leaders," he said.

Several legislators pointed out that there would be a new dynamic in the House Republican caucus, too.

With a 28-vote majority, "you could stray a bit" from the party agenda with few consequences, Urdahl said.

With the narrow margin, legislators could be pressured to stick with a party agenda.

"I would expect there would be more pressure, but there are certain matters of principle some of us will not be moved from," he added.

## Time to start healing

People become very emotional in an election, but it's time to start healing and work together, said Senate Majority Leader Dean Johnson, DFL-Willmar.

Senate Republicans are to choose a new minority leader this week. Johnson said he plans to contact the new leader to arrange a meeting to discuss the 2005 session.

The new playing field should bring about a host of new relation-

ships, he said.

"I think the governor will be a little bit more receptive to negotiate with Democrats," Johnson said. "He needs us more than he did before."

Pawlenty also "has to look in the mirror" regarding his agenda and the "good soldiers" for him who lost elections on Tuesday, he said.

"The red flag certainly went up (Tuesday) and said Greater Minnesota is part of this state," Johnson said.

— The Associated Press contributed to this story.

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## KERRY TAKES STATE, BUT BUSH DOMINATES AREA

BY DANA YOST  
Independent Editor

MARSHALL — Six of the seven counties in the Independent's coverage area voted for President Bush on Tuesday night — some of them handily.

The only county in the area that voted for John Kerry was Lac qui Parle, where Kerry won by a 52.63 to 46.09 margin over Bush.

In Lyon County, Bush won 56.86 to 41.78.

Bush took Lincoln County 51.97 to 46.59; he won Yellow Medicine 49.98 to 48.61; he won Redwood County 60.18 to 38.14.

The president also won in Murray County, 54.40 to 44.38; and he claimed Pipestone County 60.93 to 37.76.

The numbers are based on final but unofficial figures reported on the Minnesota Secretary of State's election Web site.

"Southwest Minnesota tends to be a little conservative," said Chris McHorney, a political science professor at Southwest Minnesota State University. "And this congressional district voted for Bush in 2000. So this is not terribly surprising."

Statewide, Kerry won the race in Minnesota, 51.08 to 47.61 for Bush.

In the 7th Congressional District race, incumbent DFL Rep. Collin Peterson won all five of his area counties over Republican challenger David Sturrock of Marshall.

In Lyon County, Peterson beat Sturrock 55.08 to 44.82. Peterson won Lincoln County 65.88 to 34.12, and won Yellow Medicine 65.96 to 34.01.

Peterson also took Lac qui Parle 69.85 to 30.15, and won Redwood 56.92 to 43.01.

Overall, Peterson won the district race 66.06 percent to Sturrock's 33.86 percent.

In the 1st Congressional District, incumbent GOP Rep. Gil Gutknecht won both local counties — capturing Murray 56.33 to DFL challenger Leigh Pomeroy's 37.21. Gutknecht also won Pipestone 61.37 to 31.13.

Gutknecht won re-election with 59.60 percent of the vote overall. Pomeroy earned 35.40.

Here are final results for other major races in the area. In the five local legislative races, incumbents won every election:

### LEGISLATURE

**House District 20A:** Rep. Aaron Peterson, DFL-Madison, 55.37. Jeff Moen, R-Hendricks, 44.60.

**House District 20B:** Rep. Lyle Koenen, DFL-Clara City, 53.49. Colin Berg, R-Olivia, 46.42.

**House District 21A:** Rep. Marty Seifert, R-Marshall, 60.65. Pat Mellenthin, DFL-Marshall, 39.25.

**House District 21B:** Rep. Brad Finstad, R-New Ulm, 59.53. Joe Eckstein, DFL-New Ulm, 40.37.

**House District 22A:** Rep. Doug Magnus, R-Slayton, 57.07. Kathryn Ness, DFL-Pipestone, 42.80.

### COUNTY BOARDS (contested races)

#### Lyon

**District 4:** Steve Ritter 55.96. Jerry Gladis 43.81.

**District 5:** Mark Goodenow 52.49. C.J. Molitor 47.34.

#### Lac qui Parle

**District 1:** Todd Patzer 61.34.

Lyndon Fitzpatrick 38.35.

**District 5:** Harold Solem 70.58. Bruce Baker 29.31.

#### Lincoln

**District 1:** James Johansen 50.32. Jim Nichols 49.68.

**District 5:** Joan Jagt 70.51. Phil Leuning 28.14.

#### Murray

**District 1:** Kevin Vickerman 56.22. Steve Johnson 43.56.

**District 2:** Robert Moline 47.44. Duane Carlson 40.65. Write-ins 11.91.

**District 5:** William Sauer 56.32. Edward Reusse 43.46.

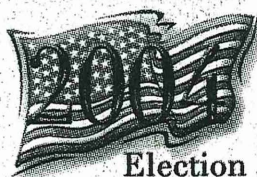
#### Pipestone

**District 1:** Luke Johnson 48.61. Ed Loll 48.03. Write-ins 3.36.

**District 5:** Jerry Remund 52.37. Erv Pribyl 47.17.



## TOP RACES AT A GLANCE



Results as of 1 a.m.

### U.S. President nationwide

80 percent of precincts reporting

George W. Bush 49,881,878

249 electoral votes

John F. Kerry 46,563,241

221 electoral votes

### U.S. President in Minnesota

3,022 of 4,108 precincts reporting

George W. Bush 1,007,792

John F. Kerry 1,126,487

### 7th Congressional District

855 of 1,241 precincts reporting

Collin Peterson 117,575

David Sturrock 59,295

### Willmar local option sales tax

Seven of 12 precincts reporting

Yes 2,178

No 2,015

### MN House District 13A

80 percent of precincts reporting

Bud Heidgerken 10,221

Bruce Shuck 4,688

### MN House District 13B

39 of 47 precincts reporting

Al Juhnke 5,708

Bonnie Wilhelm 5,319

### MN House District 18B

92 percent of precincts reporting

David Detert 8,130

Dean Urdahl 10,013

### MN House District 20A

95 percent of precincts reporting

Jeff Moen 6,923

Aaron Peterson 8,525

### MN House District 20B

85 percent of precincts reporting

Colin Berg 5,797

Lyle Koenen 7,160

### MN House District 21A

67 percent of precincts reporting

Pat Mellenthin 5,134

Marty Seifert 7,839

## WEST CENTRAL TRIBUNE

WILLMAR, MN

WEDNESDAY 16,927

NOV 3 2004



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# 'I'm learning now'

Those involved with Adult Basic Education classes let state legislators know importance of local programs

BY RAE KRUGER

Independent Staff Writer

MARSHALL — Legislators get plenty of statistics to read during the legislative session, and on Monday officials from several local agencies wanted to make sure a group of legislators met the people who make those statistics.

People like 17-year-old Kenny Fox who lives in Marshall. Fox works part-time at K-Mart and is taking classes to obtain his GED.

"I've progressed a lot since I first came here," Fox said of taking classes at Adult Basic Education.

Fox followed the suggestion of those who said if he wanted his GED,

ABE was the place to get it, he said.

Fox was one of more than two dozen participants in ABE programs, in Workforce Center and Private Industry Council programs who shared short stories of why they are participating in programs sponsored by the three agencies.

Five state legislators and a representative from U.S. Sen. Mark Dayton's office heard the stories.

They were: Sen. Jim Vickerman, DFL-Tracy; Rep. Marty Seifert, R-Marshall; Rep. Doug Magnus, R-Slayton; Rep. Lyle Koenen, DFL-Clara City; Rep. Aaron Peterson, DFL-



Photo by Greg Devereaux

Rep. Doug Magnus, R-Slayton, foreground, and Rep. Lyle Koenen, DFL-Clara City, were two of the five legislators who heard stories about how Adult Basic Education, Workforce Center and Private Industry Council programs help them during a presentation at the Lyon County Government Center on Monday.

ABE PAGE 8A

## ABE FROM PAGE 1A

Madison and Sen. Dennis Frederickson, R-New Ulm. Gary Welsh represented Dayton.

"She wants to better herself," Lois Wentzel said of her daughter Justine, who takes GED classes in Marshall.

As Wentzel told legislators about her daughter's classes, she cried.

After the presentation Wentzel said her daughter took some time to decide to take the classes, and now, she's determined to finish.

Justine Wentzel travels from Pipestone four days a week and is driven by her mother or aunt.

She likes the Marshall structure, Justine Wentzel said.

Better than when she was in school, she said.

"I'm learning now," Justine Wentzel said.

Allen Erickson of Russell said he couldn't turn on a computer before he attended computer

classes through the agencies.

Without the referral from job service, Erickson said, "I wouldn't know how to do it."

Erickson had been laid off from his job.

He continues to look for a new job.

References between the Workforce Center, PIC and ABE happen frequently in Marshall and other counties in southwestern Minnesota, employees said.

That kind of communication doesn't occur elsewhere in the state, said Lois Schmidt, the facilitator of Monday's presentation.

"It doesn't always happen, but it happens here, very well," Schmidt said.

Halimo Said, a native of Somalia, arrived after parent/teacher conferences to tell the legislators why she likes English as a Second Language

classes.

"I want to better my future, I want to better my son's future," she said. "I like to practice English, I want to talk, talk..."

Said also participates in the Family Literacy program where during a recent class she did role playing in various jobs.

One of her roles was receptionist.

"A receptionist talks with the customers, answers the phone, can give money back..." she said.

Said may not be receptionist today, but participants and agency employees said the programs are about helping people with what they want to be tomorrow.

For some, that tomorrow could be in several years; for others, life could improve significantly after they pass their final GED test in a few months.

INDEPENDENT

MARSHALL, MN  
TUESDAY 7,904  
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WEST CENTRAL TRIBUNE

WILLMAR, MN  
MONDAY 16,927  
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MINNESOTA OPINION

# Here's a look at candidates the Tribune endorsed

Minnesota and the rest of America go to the polls Tuesday as citizens cast their ballots in numerous races, from local school board races up to the race for president.

As in any election, every vote including yours is important as it can make a difference. So please take the time to complete your civic duty and vote on Tuesday.

Most Minnesota polling places will open at 7 a.m. Tuesday and all will close at 8 p.m. To learn where to vote, you can call your city clerk or county auditor. You may also check out the secretary of state's Web site at: [www.sos.state.mn.us](http://www.sos.state.mn.us).

The West Central Tribune made a series of candidate endorsements in recent weeks. Our endorsements were based on interviews with the candidates and/or their responses to our questionnaires, a review of their backgrounds, and our knowledge of the candidates.

Here is a review of those endorsements:

## Federal offices

**President, vice president:** George W. Bush and Richard Cheney. The Republican ticket from Texas and Wyoming. They have served one term.

**House 7th District:** Collin Peterson. A conservative Democrat from Detroit Lakes, he is a six-term incumbent. He holds a seat on the Agriculture committee.

## State offices

**House 13A:** Bud Heidgerken or Bruce Shuck. The one-term incumbent, Heidgerken is a former teacher and small business owner. He is the Republican candidate from Freeport. Shuck is the second-time challenger and is a farmer and sales representative. He is also a former Kandiyohi County commissioner. He is the Democratic candidate from Sunburg.

**House 13B:** Al Juhnke. He is the four-term incumbent and is a real estate appraiser. He is a Democrat from Willmar.

**House 14B:** Jim DeRose. He is a former teacher and current small business owner. He is a Republican from Richmond.

**House 18B:** James Detert. He is a family practice physician. He is a Democrat from Litchfield.

**House 20A:** Aaron Peterson. He is the one-term incumbent and is a land-use consultant. He is a Democrat from Madison.

**House 20B:** Lyle Koenen. He is a one-term incumbent and is a farmer. He is a Democrat from Maynard.

## Kandiyohi County offices

**District 2:** Dennis Peterson or Alan Welle. Peterson is the three-term incumbent and a farmer. A former township officer, Peterson lives in Green Lake Township. Welle is the challenger and is a public school teacher. A former state legislator, Welle lives on Eagle Lake near Willmar.

## City of Willmar

**Local-option sales tax:** Vote "yes" on local-option sales tax to fund four economic development projects — completion of new airport and expansion of industrial park; purchase 60 acres of Willmar Regional Treatment Center land; expand city trails connecting to regional trails and connect the Willmar Civic Center and Blue Line Club buildings.

**Ward 2:** D. Michael Burgett. He grew up in Kandiyohi County. He is an attorney and lives in Willmar. As a young father, he can bring a unique perspective to the council.

**Ward 4:** Jay Lawton. He has served on the city's planning and zoning board as well as several city task forces. He has lived in Willmar for 15 years and works at the distribution center at Jennie-O Turkey Store.

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INDEPENDENT

MARSHALL, MN  
SUNDAY 7,904  
OCT 17 2004

# Candidates on gay marriage

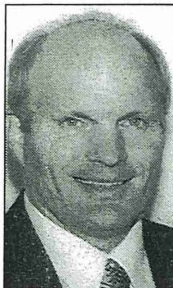
SIXTH OF A SEVEN-WEEK SERIES GIVING LOCAL CANDIDATES FOR THE STATE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES A CHANCE TO RESPOND TO A SINGLE ISSUE EACH WEEK. TODAY'S QUESTION: WHAT IS YOUR STAND ON GAY MARRIAGE AND A PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO BAN IT?

## HOUSE DISTRICT 20B

### Colin Berg

I eagerly signed The Defense of Marriage Pledge, which states: "I pledge to support allowing the people of Minnesota to vote on whether our State Constitution should be amended to provide that marriage or its legal equivalent is limited only to the union of one man and one woman."

Some people say that we don't need a constitutional amendment ... that it's already a matter of law. People in other states had similar opinions, only to find their laws struck down in the courts as unconstitutional.



BERG  
R-OLIVIA

We also need to be reminded that laws change over time. They are amended and repealed. Constitutions are amended less frequently. The purpose of a Constitutional amendment would be to state our intentions in no uncertain terms and to make them permanent.

Refer back to the wording of the Pledge. Notice that legislators don't pass the constitutional amendments themselves. They simply allow the amendment to be placed on the ballot and decided by the voters.

Some legislators and candidates suggest that this amendment is divisive should not be a campaign issue. I respond that, since it is already Minnesota law, it is only divisive because those opposed to the amendment make it so. If they would allow Minnesotans to vote on and pass the amendment, the issue goes away.

Others argue that the amendment is discriminatory. My position is that it is just the opposite. We are not treating anyone differently, we are treating everyone exactly the same. Regardless of your race, color, creed, or religion, we are using the same legal definition of marriage for everyone.

Doesn't this interfere with our personal freedoms? No, not really. There will still be unmarried couples living together, whether heterosexual or gay. We have laws against bigamy and polygamy and no one suggests that those laws interfere with personal freedoms.

In two nights at the Renville County Fair, there were 109 people who signed a petition calling for the Constitutional amendment defining marriage. Many more would have signed had they known about the petition. People want to vote on this amendment. Let's give the people what they want.

### Lyle Koenen



KOENEN  
DFL-MAYNARD

The bill that passed off the House floor in the Minnesota House of Representatives would have put the question on the Nov. 2 ballot. It would have asked voters to decide if marriage between man and woman only should be added to Minnesota's Constitution as an amendment.

Marriage between same-sex partners is illegal and not recognized in our state no matter if the same-sex marriage is recognized elsewhere or not. This is in statute at this time.

I co-author the Marriage Amendment bill and, of course, voted for it. Marriage should be between one man and one woman only.



WEST CENTRAL TRIBUNE

WILLMAR, MN  
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2004 DU E EDITORIAL  
TRIBUNE EDITORIAL

# Detert is best choice for House District 18B

**T**he Minnesota House 18B • race features Republican incumbent Dean Urdahl and Democratic challenger David Detert. A competitive race, this 2004 matchup is a re-run of the 2002 Republican primary, when Urdahl defeated Detert by only 292 votes out of 2,722 cast.

District 18B includes all of Meeker County, except for Collinwood and Cedar Mills townships, and six townships in western Wright County. This is a growing district, especially in the eastern sector.



Detert

The West Central Tribune recommends Detert as the best choice for the voters of **District 20B.**

Detert has been a family practice physician in Litchfield 16 years and in Redwood Falls for 6 years. A U.S. Navy and Minnesota Army National Guard veteran, he has medical and leadership experience from the military.

With health care costs are a top issue throughout Minnesota, Detert's medical experience will bring an important insight and perspective to the Legislature discussion on this issue.

Detert has six years of experience on the Litchfield School Board and has served as president of the school foundation.

Raised on a Martin County farm, Detert is familiar with agricultural issues. The dairy industry, including dairy processing, and other agriculture enterprises are significant for Meeker County.

Both candidates agree education and transportation are important issues for the district and rural Minnesota.

Urdahl has taught and coached in the New London-Spicer District since 1971. He operates a private painting business, is a published author and has served on several state boards. He has also been involved in Republican politics.

After winning his legislative seat in 2002 on his fourth try, Urdahl has worked hard for his district. Among his accomplishments are legislation for agricultural production facilities to qualify for state loan programs and establishment of Green Lake State Park. However, Urdahl is caught between a caucus increasingly dominated by suburban legislators and the rural needs of his district.

Detert's experience and background will help him better represent the needs of the district and its citizens.

We endorse Detert for election in District 20B.

#### Find Out More:

Dean Urdahl: (651) 296-4344;  
urdahls@hotmail.com

David Detert: (320) 693-8014;  
www.detertfor18b.homestead.com

20B



## HOUSE DISTRICT 20B

### Colin Berg

I grew up on a diversified crops and livestock farm in Western Minnesota. When I was growing up, livestock operations were considered a normal part of production agriculture. Some livestock operations were larger, some were smaller, but all sizes of operations were accepted.

The key questions are: 1) Can livestock be raised in an environmentally safe way? 2) Are people and livestock compatible ... can they co-exist in relative peace and harmony?

California is renowned for its environmental policies, yet animal agriculture is prominent there. Based on the 2002 Census of Agriculture, California has almost the same number of farm acres as Minnesota. At the same time, California has over sixty percent more annual revenue from livestock sales than Minnesota. Sixty percent more revenue under strict environmental standards ... yes, it can be done!

California also has almost seven times as many people as Minnesota, based on the 2000 Census. Seven times the people and 60 percent more livestock revenue would suggest compatibility.

Minnesota is just one example. Pennsylvania has almost 250 percent of the population of Minnesota and over 250 percent of the livestock revenue per acre of Minnesota. Now I'm not suggesting that we should increase livestock production in Minnesota by 250 percent, but I do think that there is room for livestock expansion within our state.

A second ag-related issue in Minnesota is renewable fuels. With support from the Minnesota legislature, ethanol is blended in almost every gallon of gasoline sold in Minnesota. E-85, an 85 percent ethanol fuel blend, is becoming sought after by operators of Flex Fuel Vehicles. Bio-diesel is growing both in popularity and demand.

Once the Federal government passes a national energy policy, the demand for renewable fuels will grow exponentially.

An important revenue source from renewable fuels is the sale of the co-product — the material left after processing the corn and the soybeans. The co-products from the renewable fuels industry are high-quality livestock feeds. The expansion of animal agriculture in Minnesota would financially benefit the renewable fuels industry.

Another ag issue that needs to be addressed is the negotiation of the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). The sugar industry within the United States could be irreparably damaged by CAFTA if protections aren't put into place. Yes, CAFTA is a national issue, but it is also a state concern.

What's at stake? CAFTA could adversely affect over 730,000 acres of sugar beets produced by more than 2,000 farmers in Minnesota and North Dakota. If the sugar industry falters, so would a majority of those 2,000 farms. The 730,000 sugar beet acres would likely go into corn, soybean, and wheat production, which could cause lower prices for those commodities.

It's not just the farmers that would be harmed. Add to the list all of the people who work at the beet plants, the individuals that count on the sugar income to support local business, and our churches, schools, and communities. We will all lose if the sugar industry fails.

Although there are a number of the challenges that face agriculture, there are an equal number of opportunities. Agriculture has never changed as fast as it has in the last ten years. The demand for food and fiber is rapidly expanding. Farmers need to be involved in the decision-making process to ensure that appropriate rules, regulations, and agreements are enacted.



BERG  
R-OLIVIA

### Lyle Koenen

The Livestock Task Force addressed seven areas of concern for livestock farmers: siting, MPCA permits, NPDES permits, animal units, alternative environmental review, financing, and education.

1. Siting — The Livestock Task Force did not reach consensus on this one, but set up a subgroup to have recommendations ready by Nov. 1. Livestock farmers, I believe, need predictability in siting regulations along with guidance in moving through the process. Minnesota is a very diverse state, so a cookie-cutter approach will not work. With the feedback I got on local control, it is very clear local control must be protected.

2. MPCA permits — It would be very helpful to livestock farmers to have MPCA help farmers with the permitting process. This help must be available to farms of all sizes.

3. NPDES permits — This should be directed at the permit process for advanced technologies such as manure digesters. NPDES is National Pollution Discharge Elimination System permits which MPCA is responsible for in Minnesota.

4. Animal units — The Environmental Quality Board (EQB) is directed to evaluate animal-unit thresholds triggering environmental assessment work sheets (EAWs) and report by Nov. 1. On this one we need to move slowly as changes were passed into law in this area this past session. It's important to see how these changes will affect the process and the end result.

5. Alternative environmental review — This is targeted at the very small minority of the largest feedlots, many which are investor-owned. My first concern is independent family farms, a very large majority of farmers in Minnesota. For these reasons, this one is low on my list of priorities.

6. Financing — MDA and DEED are to review state loan and grant programs to better meet the financing needs of livestock producers. This one is very important for farmers and has my full support. This money should be available to independent family farmers. The loans should have caps so a few very large feedlots do not use all the funds.

7. Education — This area directs state agencies to support education programs on the importance of animal agriculture to the state's economy. I believe this education should also include information on the importance of family farms and how important they are to rural communities and economy.

#### Summary:

The report, I believe, should have spent more time on helping beginning independent farmers. Also, sustainable and organic farmers were not addressed. Organic farming is growing at 20 percent per year, and should not be ignored.

Profitability is important if farmers are to continue farming. Some agency personnel and legislators say the state can't do anything about price, however, MDA does have a marketing division.

Remember, under the current permitting process nine of the top 20 largest hog feedlots in the United States are in Minnesota. Minnesota is No. 1 in turkey production and has 46 dairy farms milking 500 cows or more, an increase of 25 percent in the last year.



KOENEN  
DFL-MAYNARD

20B

# Candidates on agriculture

FOURTH OF A SEVEN-WEEK SERIES GIVING LOCAL CANDIDATES FOR THE STATE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES A CHANCE TO RESPOND TO A SINGLE ISSUE EACH WEEK. TODAY'S QUESTION: WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE GOVERNOR'S LIVESTOCK TASK FORCE, AND ARE THERE OTHER PRESSING AGRICULTURE ISSUES THE LEGISLATURE SHOULD ADDRESS?

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INDEPENDENT  
MARSHALL, MN  
SUNDAY 7:04  
OCT 3 2004



DISTRICT 20B

## Koenen looks strong in 20B

BY TOM BERG  
Independent Sports Editor

MARSHALL — With 79 percent of the precincts reporting Tuesday night in the District 20B race in the Minnesota House, incumbent Lyle Koenen led challenger Colin Berg by about 7 percent.

Koenen had 6,306 votes (54 percent) to 5,340 (46 percent) for Berg.

District 20B includes part of Yellow Medicine County, and Chippewa and Renville counties.

Koenen, DFL-Clara City, is seeking his second term in the House.

The race was a rematch of the 2002 election, where Koenen prevailed.

"I'm satisfied so far," Koenen said Tuesday night. "There's no way I'm calling this race over yet...I'm cautiously optimistic."

"There's still quite a ways to go," said Berg, R-Olivia. "There's still most of cities in Renville County, which is my strength. So we'll see."

The two candidates said there wasn't a huge issue that defined the race.

"I don't know if there's been a big issue," Berg said. "I admitted in our debates that I feel we have some differences that are significant, but compared to most candidates in most races, our differences are smaller and fewer."

INDEPENDENT

MARSHALL, MN  
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FROM PAGE 3A F

"I don't know if there's a lot of separation," Koenen said. "There's a lot of issues where we're really kind of similar."

Neither candidate was ready to declare the race over Tuesday night, however.

"I hope for a 1,200-vote advantage in Renville County," Berg said. "I was hoping I could close the gap in both Yellow Medicine and Chippewa counties... if it isn't meant to be, it's not meant to be."

"It's a little too early to call," Koenen said. "We'll see when the final numbers come."



## EDITORIAL

# Getting an early read on local elections

**T**he 2004 campaign season isn't just about the presidency. Plenty of local races will be on the ballot this fall, too. And, already, local political insiders are trying to figure out who might be running in November.

One thing's for sure: There will be at least one rematch of a 2002 legislative race, while other legislative races, so far, are not so defined.

The rematch: Republican Colin Berg will run again against state Rep. Lyle Koenen, DFL-Maynard. Koenen defeated Berg in 2002 in the District 20B House race. The district includes part of Yellow Medicine County.

Berg's family confirmed Monday that he's planning to run against Koenen again. Berg is the son of longtime state Sen. Charlie Berg.

But in other area House races, so far, the incumbents are standing alone.

- District 20A: Rep. Aaron Peterson, DFL-Madison, is the incumbent. His Republican challenger from 2002, Jeff Moen of Hendricks, probably won't run this year, his family said.

- District 21A: Rep. Marty Seifert, R-Marshall, is the incumbent after another lopsided victory in 2002.

There had been some mention in Marshall in the last month that Southwest Minnesota State professor, Joseph Diaz, might run against Seifert.

But when asked directly about the race last week, Diaz said he was not running. He considered entering the campaign, but is going to spend the summer in Europe as a visiting professor.

"We will be back at the start of the school year, but I don't think it's a good idea to be out of the U.S. for such a long period in the middle and towards the end of the election season," Diaz said. "I know that I, as a voter, would have a problem with a candidate who wasn't even in the country during the campaign, so I notified the state leaders that I was declining their support for that reason and decided not to run this term."

Diaz, who has drawn national attention because of his book about witnessing an execution in Florida, didn't rule out future campaigns, though.

"It was a very tough decision because of the support that we were shown by people in the community and at the state level," he said. "But I'm young (32 years old) and plan to have a long political life..."

- District 22A: Rep. Doug Magnus, R-Slayton, unseated longtime lawmaker Ted Winter of Fulda in 2002. Winter is not planning on a rematch, according to his 2002 campaign: He's started a new business and would not have time to run against Magnus this year.

According to the state Campaign Finance Board, no other candidates have filed against incumbents in those House races, either.

While there are still many months before the November election, time is, in some ways, running short for candidates hoping to make a serious run at the House this year — especially against incumbents who'll get more media attention in coming weeks as the legislative session begins.

Tony Doom of Marshall, one of the leaders of the local DFL party, said DFL officials are working on finding candidates for local races.

There is always a need for contested races, because they tend to bring much more focus on issues of importance to the area — especially when candidates square off in debates over those issues.

And that's particularly true, now. As we've said several times, this is a pivotal year for rural Minnesota. How will St. Paul treat an area that certainly was a loser in last year's legislative session, and do candidates or incumbents have ideas on how to improve the area's status in St. Paul?

There's one other race of potential major local impact this fall, too: U.S. Rep. Collin Peterson, DFL-Minn., is up for re-election. Peterson, of Detroit Lakes, represents the 7th Congressional District, which includes Marshall and Lyon County.

David Sturrock, the Marshall city councilman and SMSU professor, has said he is considering a challenge to Peterson. If so, it will be an interesting — if not, perhaps — an uphill challenge. Peterson handily won the race in 2002, and has been an elected official for 22 years. Will Sturrock be able to generate interest and support in a district that's one of the largest, geographically, in the country?

On the other hand, Sturrock is a knowledgeable political scientist with a deep interest in policy. If he runs, that, too, could make for some compelling debates between Sturrock and Peterson.

The campaign season is under way. Let's hope good, committed candidates emerge over coming weeks and months.

INDEPENDENT

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WILLMAR, MN  
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12-20-04 EDITORIAL  
TRIBUNE EDITORIAL

# Koenen is the choice for House District 20B

**T**he Minnesota House 20B race, a re-run of the 2002 race, features Democrat first-term Lyle Koenen and Republican challenger Colin Berg. This year, as in 2002, finds both candidates commendably focusing on the issues of importance for their district.

Koenen defeated Berg by only 255 votes in 2002. Koenen now has the experience of one legislative term and is the incumbent. However, Berg ran well in 2002 as a Republican in what is considered a Democratic-leaning district.

District 20B lies along the Minnesota River, including all of Chippewa and Renville counties and part of Yellow Medicine County. The primary cities are Montevideo, Olivia and Granite Falls, all the county seats of their respective counties.



Koenen

The West Central Tribune recommends Koenen as the appropriate choice for the voters of District 20B.

This is a race between two individuals with many similar positions. Both candidates consid-

er themselves conservative on social issues, like abortion and gay marriage. They describe themselves moderates on other issues, such as budgets and education. Neither candidate has signed a no-tax pledge keeping their options open on the budget deficit.

Both men have made their careers in agriculture, the primary industry in the district. Koenen was a long-time dairy farmer and Berg was a long-time agricultural educator.

Koenen knows the needs and concerns of his rural district. He's focused on rural energy issues, such as ethanol and bio-diesel and the growing potential of wind. He is supportive of increasing the gas tax to support transportation. He is concerned about the impact of cuts in local government aid and K12 education funding during the recent state budget cuts.

A shy individual, Koenen has learned to campaign and how to represent his district. He also has two years of experience in the Legislature which is valuable.

Berg is more outgoing than his opponent. His background in agriculture and education are strong points. This is reflected in his priority for agricultural issues.

The biggest challenge for Berg is the House's Republican majority, which is currently dominated by metro suburb conservatives. One wonders if Berg could have much influence in this House Republican caucus, especially as a first-term.

Koenen is better positioned to represent the needs of all the people in this rural and diverse district.

We endorse Koenen for re-election in District 20B.

**Find Out More:**

**Lyle Koenen:** (320) 847-4305

**Colin Berg:** (320) 523-5925



# Rural pharmacies squeezed out?

Insurance companies forcing consumers to go elsewhere

By Tom Cherveney  
Staff Writer

MONTEVIDEO — Independent pharmacists in west central Minnesota are charging that large health insurance companies are unfairly squeezing them out of business, and that rural consumers will ultimately suffer.

Rural residents will lose the local access while not realizing any savings in their drug costs, pharmacists told lawmakers at a meeting Friday.

"Everybody on both ends of the spectrum is getting squeezed," said Mike Fritz, pharmacist and owner of Clara City Drug and Gift. "I don't think we're going to be gone tomorrow, but the day after I'm not so sure."

"You don't miss something until it's gone," said Dave Arneson, Arneson Snyder Drug, Montevideo.



Fritz

idea. "Our rural health care network is at risk."

Fritz and Arneson were among a dozen independent pharmacists who met Friday morning at the Chippewa County Family Service Center with State Sen. Gary Kubly, DFL-Granite Falls, and State Rep. Lyle Koenen, DFL-Maynard. The pharmacists represented communities from Appleton and Benson to Granite Falls and Renville.

Pharmacies/ Page A2

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## Pharmacies: Rural owners worry about future

Continued from A1

They were joined by hospital and nursing home administrators, public health and social service representatives in the region.

They told the legislators that practices by large insurance companies and the prescription benefit managers that oversee contracts with pharmacies are steering customers to large-volume discount chains like Target, Kmart and Wal-Mart, and to mail-order firms.

### Long distances

Fritz said Blue Cross Blue Shield recently sent letters to residents of the Clara City Care Center, telling them that his pharmacy was no longer part of the company's select network of drug providers. The letter stated that they could fill their prescriptions at out-of-town, chain pharmacies instead.

Other rural pharmacies have been similarly affected, according to Fritz. The Minnesota Department of Health recently filed a 90-day, cease and desist order that requires Blue Cross Blue Shield to honor prescriptions filled by the rural pharmacists. Fritz said the letter that went to nursing home residents came as he was negotiating with the insurance provider, and that he remains part of the network of approved providers.

It's a problem for rural health care providers as well. Tom Richter, CEO of the Madison Lutheran Home, said 42 of the nursing home's 92 residents received letters at year's end telling them that their local pharmacy was not part of the Blue Plus provider network.

Blue Cross Blue Shield eventually suggested Richter try a pharmacy in Worthington, which is 114 miles away. "I don't think they understand the difficulties we have in the rural area," said the nursing home administrator.

### Profit margins

At the heart of the issue for pharmacists is the contracts that prescription benefit managers require of rural pharmacies to be included in their networks of drug providers. They require the pharmacies to accept reimbursements for prescriptions at rates that allow very little margin, said the pharmacists.

Large-volume discount chains and mail-order firms agree to the same reimbursement rates, but they have two distinct advantages.

■ They sell a much larger volume of drugs and can manage with a lower margin.

■ And, because of the large volume, they are able to obtain rebates and discounts from drug suppliers that small town pharmacists cannot.

Large discount chains are also in a position to operate their pharmacies at a low margin for another reason, according to Barry Junwirth, Clark's Rexall Drug, Benson. They view their pharmacy services as a "loss leader" that brings customers into the front part of their stores once a month.

Arneson and other pharmacists also pointed out that the practice of establishing network drug prices means that consumers essentially pay the same for their prescriptions no matter where they go. The "savings" squeezed from the pharmacists' margins go directly to the

## Pharmacists say there's more at stake than convenience

By Tom Cherveney  
Staff Writer

MONTEVIDEO — Lifelong customers have walked into pharmacist Dave Arneson's store in Montevideo with tears in their eyes, telling him they can no longer do business with him.

Arneson told State Sen. Gary Kubly and State Rep. Lyle Koenen on Friday that they show him letters from their insurance providers stating they can no longer use his services. The letters steer the customers to mail-order firms or discount chains for their prescription needs, he said.

Yet Arneson said he is the person the former customers still call at 3 a.m. when they have questions about the drugs they are taking. Many times, they also return to the store, asking if they can buy a few pills. It's not uncommon for their mail-order prescription to arrive late, leaving them with an empty pill bottle.

There's more at stake than protecting access to life-saving medications in the hometown pharmacy, according to social service and public health representatives who met Friday in Montevideo. Many health care consumers, especially senior citizens, rely on their local pharmacist to help them manage the complex mix of drugs they may need, said Liz Auch, director of Countryside Public Health.

What she called the "teaching piece" provided by hometown pharmacists can be life-saving in itself. It helps prevent accidental misuse and makes sure that the patients realize the full benefit of the drug regimes, she said.

insurance companies, not the consumers, he said.

Arneson noted that since 1987, he has seen his reimbursement rates reduced seven to eight times, while his costs have increased.

The pharmacists said state law allows the discrimination against rural providers. It allows prescription benefit managers and insurance companies to establish networks if a consumer has access to a provider in a 60-mile radius. That makes it easy to exclude small-town pharmacies, since there is usually a large, discount chain store within a radius that large. The federal Medicare program requires a 15-mile radius, they noted.

Also, mail-order firms are able to fill 90-day prescriptions under network plans, while small-town pharmacies are limited to 30-day prescriptions. Insurance companies "steer" consumers to the mail-order firms by assessing a \$10 co-pay on the 30-day prescription, and a \$20 co-pay on the 90-day prescription.

### Future

Sen. Kubly told the pharmacists that there is a bill in the Senate that aims to address some of their concerns, but that the bigger issue of discrimination against rural health

Kris Boike, a nurse with the public health agency, said a lack of local access could also mean that some people will go without needed medication. Many of the clients her agency serves have limited resources. "They are struggling to have a car that runs," she said.

Social service workers also noted that taxpayers ultimately pay the costs when insurance providers and others restrict access. Peggy Heglund, Yellow Medicine County Family Services director, said 100 Blue Cross Blue Shield customers in Canby switched to the nonprofit UCare network. Her office saw increased expenses managing the switch. The cost of transporting clients to out-of-town UCare providers are now greater as well, she pointed out.

The pharmacists pointed to Gov. Tim Pawlenty's recent decision to open Canadian pharmacies to Minnesota consumers via the Internet. Barry Jungwirth, Clark's Rexall Drug, Benson, said Canadian pharmacies enjoy advantages.

The Canadian government negotiates volume prices for the company. The Canadian government does not allow drug companies to advertise directly to consumers, so drug prices in the country do not include those costs. And, American consumers are funding most of the research and development for drugs.

The added rub, said Jungwirth, is that Minnesota requires he assess a 2 percent tax on the prescription orders he fills. "Why should I have to pay that and take care of Canada?" he asked.

care providers remains a problem.

The pharmacists said the extent of the problem will become apparent as they retire and find it impossible to sell their businesses. It will leave their communities without a pharmacy and make it all the harder for the towns to attract and keep young families.

Jeffrey Lopez, chairman of the Chippewa County Board of Commissioners, said the county hosted the meeting due to the urgency of the problem. "We have a tire

that is going flat fast," he said, adding that rural health care providers need to make state and federal lawmakers aware of the problem.

The pharmacists have also been in contact with the Attorney General's office.

Yet even if they are successful against Blue Cross Blue Shield, the pharmacists said other threats lie down the road. Pharmacist Don Saucke, Granite Drug, Granite Falls, said the new federal Medicare reimbursement rates are pegged at or below the costs incurred by independent, rural pharmacies in filling them.



Lopez



INDEPENDENT

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## Local control suffers under Gov. Pawlenty

BY REP. LYLE KOENEN  
DFL-Maynard

A great many different issues will be discussed during the 2004 legislative session, but the biggest "under the radar" issue is the ongoing erosion of local control in many areas of Minnesota government.

The question of local control vs. top-down government is most obvious — for rural people, at least — in the controversy over animal agriculture and livestock feedlots. But we are also seeing questions about local control raised in education, in property taxes and local government finance, and in other areas like 4-H and Extension Service cuts.

The animal agriculture issue is likely to come to a head later this session. The powerful economic interests advocating bigger and bigger feedlots want the state to write the rules, replacing the local laws and regulations created by rural counties and townships. The reason is simple: They don't want to deal with crowds of ornery rural folks at local zoning hearings every time they want to set up another large-scale feedlot. It's much easier to have lobbyists work the system in the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, and have regulations written in some office in St. Paul.

I strongly believe in local control on this issue, because it is the local residents and local governments who have to deal with the effect of living next door to big livestock operations. Our current system works well, and few people raise objections to individual family farmers expanding their operations.

The problems arise with larger investor-

owned facilities. Some counties or townships are more open to these operations than others, and that should be their decision. I trust county and township officials to know what their constituents want. But in places where people don't want large feedlots, why should they be imposed on that community by the power of the state?

Local control is emerging as an important issue in education as well. The Legislature is currently reviewing proposed learning standards in social studies and science, following adoption of reading and math standards last year. While much of the discussion has been over the apparent political bent of the social-studies standards, again the question of local control vs. top-down government is a more fundamental question.

Education Commissioner Cheri Pearson Yecke, who is pushing these new standards, is strangely disrespectful of local control of schools — especially for a self-proclaimed conservative who claims to believe in smaller government. The well-meaning drive for accountability in schools, which is a worthwhile goal, seems to have been sidetracked into top-down imposition of politically designed standards and operational directives.

Ignoring local control issues has cost Commissioner Yecke a great deal of support in the Legislature. Many DFLers, including myself, oppose confirmation of her appointment. Even some conservative groups have begun to question her top-down style.

The erosion of local control is also hitting local governments. In last year's Republican-designed budget plan, cities and counties lost millions in state aid, but were given a host of new responsibilities for things like health

care and housing prisoners. The same thing happened when cuts were imposed in 4-H programs and Extension.

The message of Republican leaders to local officials was simply to take over programs and duties that the state was dropping. Many cities and counties went through some very tough decisions about budgets and taxes because the state imposed these new burdens on them.

The gradual disappearance of local control is a very fundamental change in Minnesota government. Local control means local people have a say in their own future. Top-down government gives the power to special interest groups who can hire lobbyists and influence the Legislature and the state agencies. It's a very dangerous development for rural Minnesota.

INDEPENDENT

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## Budget, bonding at top of 2004 legislative agenda

BY REP. LYLE KOENEN  
DFL-Maynard

A new year will bring a new legislative session, but unfortunately lawmakers will be tackling an old familiar topic when they return to St. Paul on Feb. 2: the budget deficit.

The Finance Department forecast a \$185 million deficit in a report issued last December. They will issue an updated forecast at the end of February, and that's the one that will be used for budgetary decisions this year. With Minnesota's economy still in the doldrums

no one expects things to get any better. In fact, with good-paying jobs being replaced with low-wage, no-benefits jobs at an increasing pace, the state budget might even get worse.

This session will also see action on the state bonding bill for building projects. I was very pleased to see Gov. Tim Pawlenty endorse a \$635,000 package to assist Buffalo Lake in recovering from last summer's tornado and \$1.98 million for the Montevideo flood control project. However, the governor declined to fund the \$1.5 million request for the Bird Island sewer separation project, acquisition of flood-prone properties in Granite Falls or the Ag Initiative Center in Olivia. The fate of several remodeling projects proposed for Minnesota West College in Granite Falls remains uncertain, because the governor recommended few higher-education requests. I plan to work with Sen. Gary Kubby to seek approval for all the projects in our area.

The bonding bill will be part of the overall budget package, since the cost of

paying off bonds into the future has to be part of the budget mix — just as a family budget has to allow for the monthly mortgage payment. But like a family, the state budget has to cover both short-term and long-term needs. I'm concerned that we may end up sacrificing long-term benefits to cover the short-term need to balance the budget, particularly in areas of greatest interest to rural Minnesota.

In most segments of the budget — particularly in major categories like Local Government Aid, education, health care and transportation — the cuts made in 2003 have already begun to damage the long-term needs of rural communities. The local-aid cuts have forced property tax increases averaging 11 percent for average-value homes and 5 percent to 6 percent for businesses across southwest and west-central Minnesota. That hurts our ability to attract new business and new residents. The viability of our rural communities is threatened if we can't offer good schools, good roads and locally available health care — to say nothing of the cuts to ethanol development and 4-H.

The truth is, Minnesota's budget picture won't get better until its economy gets better. The deficit has persisted, despite all the budget cuts, because income and sales tax revenues are running some \$500 million less than what was expected when the budget was written last May. Thousands remain out of work, and even those still working aren't spending.

So it's probably unrealistic to expect the Legislature to undo many, or even any, of the direct budget cuts made in 2003. What we should be doing this year is laying out the road map for handling the ongoing and long-term needs of rural

communities.

Particularly in rural Minnesota, we need good-paying jobs, more development of the wind and agri-fuels industries, better roads and better communications. Those are the core of a new strategy for rural economic growth I am supporting with other rural lawmakers.

This new strategy, "Growing Minnesota," calls for Minnesota to seek out emerging industries, like nanotechnology or genetics, and home-grown energy development including wind power, ethanol and soy-based biodiesel production. Supporting the growth effort is a renewed commitment to improving rural roads and telecommunications facilities, such as high-speed Internet and statewide, gap-free cell phone service.

Minnesota's home-grown ethanol industry, which is largely owned by co-ops of local farmers and business owners, is a model of how the public and private sectors can work together to create prosperity.

The key fact about the success of ethanol is that the profits stayed at home. We ought to aim for that with wind, biodiesel and other new industries. The question is whether we in rural Minnesota will eat the pie we bake, or let someone else take it and leave us crumbs.

As always, I enjoy hearing from constituents on public issues. You can reach me at the Capitol at (651) 296-4346 or write to 327 State Office Building, St. Paul, Minn. 55155. You can reach me at home at 175 30th Ave S.E., Maynard, Minn. 56260, telephone (320) 367-2556. Computer users can send e-mail to rep.lyle.koenen@house.mn or visit my Web site at www.house.mn/20b.



# WEST CENTRAL TRIBUNE

WILLMAR, MN  
THURSDAY 16,927  
NOV 4 2004



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## Local political family has 3 office holders

CLARA CITY — George W. Bush kept a political family's tradition intact, and so did a Chippewa County father and his two sons.

With Tuesday's election results now tabulated, three members of the Koenen family won elected offices.

Kenneth Koenen won re-election to his seat on the Chippewa County Board by defeating challenger Larry Kittelson by 726 to 527.



Kenneth

His son Lyle won re-election to the Minnesota House of Representatives for District 20B by holding off a second challenge from Colin Berg. Koenen, D-Clara City, and Berg, R-Olivia, had battled for the post two years ago. Lyle Koenen lost his first bid for state office when he challenged Colin Berg's father Charlie Berg for a State Senate seat in 2000.



Lyle

first foray into elected office by winning the mayor's job in Clara City. Kurt Koenen was unopposed for the post and collected 557 votes.

There was another political family in the making, but the husband and wife team were unsuccessful in their bids for city offices in Appleton. Jeff Stitt sought the mayor's job and his wife Amy wanted a seat on the City Council.



Kurt

Lyle's younger brother Kurt made his

— Tom Cherveney

# INDEPENDENT

MARSHALL, MN  
SATURDAY 7,904  
SEP 18 2004



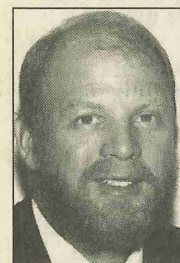
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## Lyle Koenen

If this is so, why are we paying more and more? Reasons include new or increased fees of \$400 million, cuts to local units of government of over \$300 million while not easing mandates, shifts in school funding to local property tax.

The discussion was never no new taxes, but instead who is going to pay and how. The tax discussion should be fair tax policy.



KOENEN  
DFL-MAYNARD

Households with incomes over \$500,000 (top 1 percent of taxpayers) pay 8.4 percent of their income in tax, including property, income and sales. The rest of Minnesota citizens pay between 11 percent to 12 percent of their income in tax. In the interest of fairness, these levels in terms of percentage of income paid in tax should be equal. This could allow a small tax cut for most Minnesotans.

Also, in the interest of fairness, corporate tax loopholes should be closed. Local business owners that compete with corporations who pay no tax or little tax are at a competitive disadvantage. Sixty-one percent of corporations in this

country pay no income tax.

The 2003 session cuts were made that were not spread evenly across the different budget areas. Before that session started we were hearing from leadership. The pain must be spread evenly. Didn't happen!

With the likelihood of another budget deficit, cuts must be made evenly and not just from this point going forward, but also taking into consideration the 2003 cuts.

It is important to remember when talking about taxes, that the Now New Tax pledge was never a reality for most Minnesotans. If you lived in the wealthy outer-ring suburbs with a household income of \$500,000 per year you have a positive impact from the pledge, if not, you are paying a higher percentage of your income in taxes.

The price of government (state and local tax revenue/personal income) in Minnesota is going down, projected to decrease from 16 percent to 15 percent by "2007."

# INDEPENDENT

MARSHALL, MN  
SATURDAY 7,904  
OCT 23 2004



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## Lyle Koenen



KOENEN  
DFL-MAYNARD

The first thing that has to happen is to have all rural legislatures present and vote for rural Minnesota. Over and over again, I would see rural legislators vote against their own districts and vote for bills favoring the metro. Just because the Republican majority caucus is controlled by metro interests is no reason for its rural members to follow their marching orders.

The next step is to take each issue and find metro communities that may have similar interest to rural Minnesota, if possible, and work with their legislators on the common goal. Examples would be Minneapolis and St. Paul on school funding and Local Government Aid (LGA).

I've also found that some metro area legislators are willing to listen and learn when it comes to rural issues. Take advantage of these opportunities.



JOURNAL

NEW ULM, MN  
THURSDAY 9,206  
NOV 4 2004



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## Local incumbents dominate challengers

By KURT NESBITT  
Journal Staff Writer

NEW ULM — With a couple exceptions, the incumbent state and county officials held onto their seats in Tuesday's election.

With the exception of one state House race, practically all of the representatives that held office before the election were allowed another term.

A total of 94,656 voters turned up at the polls in Blue Earth, Brown, Nicollet, Redwood, Renville, Sibley and Watonwan counties for the election, keeping turnouts on a par with the last presidential election in 2000.

For the most part, the votes went towards the Bush-Cheney ticket although the Kerry-Edwards team won the most votes two area counties. Brown and Redwood counties had the highest percentages voting for Bush and Cheney — 60 percent — while Blue Earth and Nicollet counties showed the highest turnouts for Kerry and Edwards with 51 percent and 50 percent respectively.

In the Congressional races, Republican Congressman Gil Gutknecht held on to his seat in Congressional District 1.

In Congressional District 7, DFLer Colin Peterson won 66 percent of the votes while his challenger, Republican David E.

Sturrock, garnered 33.84 percent. Many of the area incumbents in the Minnesota House of Representatives were re-elected Tuesday.

In District 20B, DFLer Lyle Koenen received 53 percent of the overall vote and his challenger, Republican Colin Berg, got 46 percent.

Republican Marty Seifert won re-election to his seat in House District 21A with 60 percent of the overall vote while challenger Pat Mellenthin, a DFLer, received 39.28 percent. Seifert also earned 60 percent of the votes in Redwood County and Mellenthin received 39 percent.

Republican Brad Finstad won re-election in House District 21B with 59 percent of the overall vote. His opponent, DFLer Joe Eckstein, won 40 percent of the overall vote. Finstad's best numbers were in Redwood County, where he won 61 percent of the vote. Sixty percent of Brown County voters cast votes for Finstad and 53 percent of the voters in Watonwan County selected the same. Eckstein's highest return was in Watonwan County, where 46 percent marked their ballots beside his name. Eckstein's worst numbers were Redwood County at 38 percent of the vote.

**Brown County**

Incumbent Brown County commissioners Richard Seeboth and Charles Guggisberg both ran

unopposed. Incumbent SWCD candidates Richard Schroepfer, Ervin Windschitl and Jack Vogel also ran unopposed.

**Nicollet County**

Incumbent Nicollet County Commissioner James Stenson ran unopposed in the county's second commissioner district.

David Haack defeated Harry J. Jeness in Nicollet County's fourth commissioner district, 1,930 votes to 1,276 votes.

The three candidates for the Nicollet County Soil and Water Conservation District, Eldon H. Brown, Bruce Hulke and Gerald Rodning, ran unopposed.

**Redwood County**

Incumbent Redwood County commissioners Brian Kletscher and Eugene H. Short ran unopposed.

Donald Steffen defeated David Geis for the supervisor of SWCD District 2, 63.9 percent to 35.95 percent.

SWCD candidates Ralph Heiling and Tom Daub ran unopposed.

**Renville County**

Incumbent Renville County commissioners Ralph G. Novotny and Gale Dahlager both ran

unopposed.

Soil and Water Conservation District candidates James Schafer, Bill Rademacher and Loyal Fischer ran unopposed.

**Sibley County**

Incumbent Sibley County commissioners Bill Pinske and Leo L. Bauer both ran unopposed and were re-elected with roughly 99 percent of the votes.

SWCD candidates Gary Schaefer and Gerald K. Smith ran unopposed. David Trebelhorn beat Michael B. Mueller in District 4 with 60.66 percent of the vote, while Mueller received 39.22 percent.

**Watonwan County**

Dwayne Krenz ran unopposed and was elected to commissioner district 1. John A. Baerg, who also ran unopposed, won District 5. Bill Berg beat Jerry Engstrom in District 3 with 60.32 percent to Engstrom's 38.72 percent.

A write-in candidate in SWCD District 3 received 100 percent of the votes. Sanford "Sandy" Seibert and Steve Wilke ran unopposed in SWCD districts.

WEST CENTRAL TRIBUNE

WILLMAR, MN  
SATURDAY 16,927  
OCT 30 2004



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## Like father, like sons

### Family shares passion for public service

By Tom Cherveney  
Staff Writer

CLARA CITY — They don't have a sprawling ranch near Crawford, Texas, like that other American political family, George H. Bush and sons George W. and Jeb.

They have the home place in Havelock Township of Chippewa County.

Good enough, because it's here that Kenneth Koenen and sons Lyle and Kurt have held so many discussions about politics that all three are now office seekers.

Father led the way when he ran for a seat on the Chippewa County Board of Commissioners and began serving in 1993. "I decided why not, and then I went for it," said Kenneth.

He's now a 12-year veteran of the board and seeking his fourth term in a race with challenger Larry Kittelson.

Lyle, the oldest of four Koenen siblings, was next to follow his father's footsteps into public office. He ran for the Minnesota Senate in 2000 when he took on incumbent Charlie Berg. He lost, but Lyle won a seat in the state House of Representatives in 2002 by defeating Colin Berg, his former opponent's son. Now, he's facing a rematch with Colin Berg to retain his seat in District 20B.

The latest Koenen to enter the political ring is Kurt. He's running to be mayor of Clara City.

It's the newcomer to political campaigning who is approaching Election Day without the jitters that his older brother and father know. Kurt is running unopposed.

But no different than his older brother or father, Kurt said his interest in public service was shaped on the family's dairy farm in Havelock Township. Politics was always a topic of conversation whenever they gathered around the kitchen table,



Tribune photos by Tom Cherveney

**Chippewa County's political family has a Havelock Township farm place rather than a Texas ranch, but Kenneth Koenen, right, and his sons Lyle, left, and Kurt, center, are every bit as interested in public office as George H.W. Bush and his sons, George W. and Jeb.**

and they carried it on while milking the cows and doing the other farm work, the three said.

The brothers were often joined in their discussions by sister Karla and youngest brother Paul. It's a safe bet to say that their mother, Emma, had no problems making her opinions known too.

But make no mistake: It's Kenneth, Lyle and Kurt who are the most passionate when it comes to politics. At family gatherings these days, it's not long before other family members excuse themselves one by one, leaving the three at the table and in lively conversation about politics, according to Kenneth.

All three are Democrats, a tradition handed down by Kenneth's father and mother.

That doesn't mean the three always agree. "The disagreements are what make it interesting," said Kenneth.

Is father always right? "I thought I was," said Kenneth, laughing. "What I didn't know didn't hurt me."

Kenneth said his parents often discussed political issues with the family, and so it was only natural for him to do likewise.

Lyle said the family's involvement in farming played a role in their political interests too. State and federal policies directly affect almost every aspect of farming, from land use regulations to market conditions.

In fact, Lyle said that watching farm profits shrink due to policy decisions in Washington and St. Paul helped motivate him to run for office. The family had tried renting more land and milking more cows before realizing: "You can't outwork bad policies," said Lyle.

Kenneth believes that another reason the three are willing to become involved in the political system is the tone of those many conversations around the table or in the milk parlor.

There was never a note of cynicism. "We always talked about what we wanted to do if we had an opportunity to have a voice in it," said Kenneth.

Having that voice, and being able to see the changes they can bring about, are the rewards they enjoy most about serving in public office, said Kenneth and Lyle.

All three said their spouses have been supportive of their work in public office.

Both Lyle and Kurt have children of their own, and like their father, have never been shy about discussing politics around their own dinner tables.

Kurt can even do a little campaigning at home. His son Matt just turned 18 and will be casting his first ballot in this election.

Come election night, Kurt said he will probably stay in town and watch the results come in with other candidates for the City Council.

Kenneth and Lyle know that the results from their elections won't be tallied until much later. They expect to be waiting it out around the table at home on the farm, where, of course, the talk will be on politics.



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MARSHALL, MN  
DAILY 7,904  
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## Koenen announces ag education scholarships

ST. PAUL — Rural young people interested in careers in agriculture can apply for the 2004 Minnesota Agricultural Education Leadership Council scholarship program, according to Rep. Lyle Koenen.

"The purpose of the council, and of this program, is to encourage the development of ag education, so that rural young people can find careers in rural settings, whether as vocational ag teachers, agribusiness professionals or in production agriculture," Koenen said.

To obtain a scholarship form, visit the MAELC Web site at [www.maelc.state.mn.us](http://www.maelc.state.mn.us), write to Ulrika Speckman, MAELC, 1954 Buford Ave. 320 VoTech Building, St. Paul, Minn. 55108, or call (612) 624-6256. The deadline is March 1, 2004.

The program is designed to encourage high school seniors to enroll in the Division of Agricultural, Food and Environmental Education at the University of Minnesota, or one of the University of Minnesota Agricultural Education Partnership Programs.

Up to \$20,000 is available, or \$25,000 for students study at the University of Minnesota-Crookston.

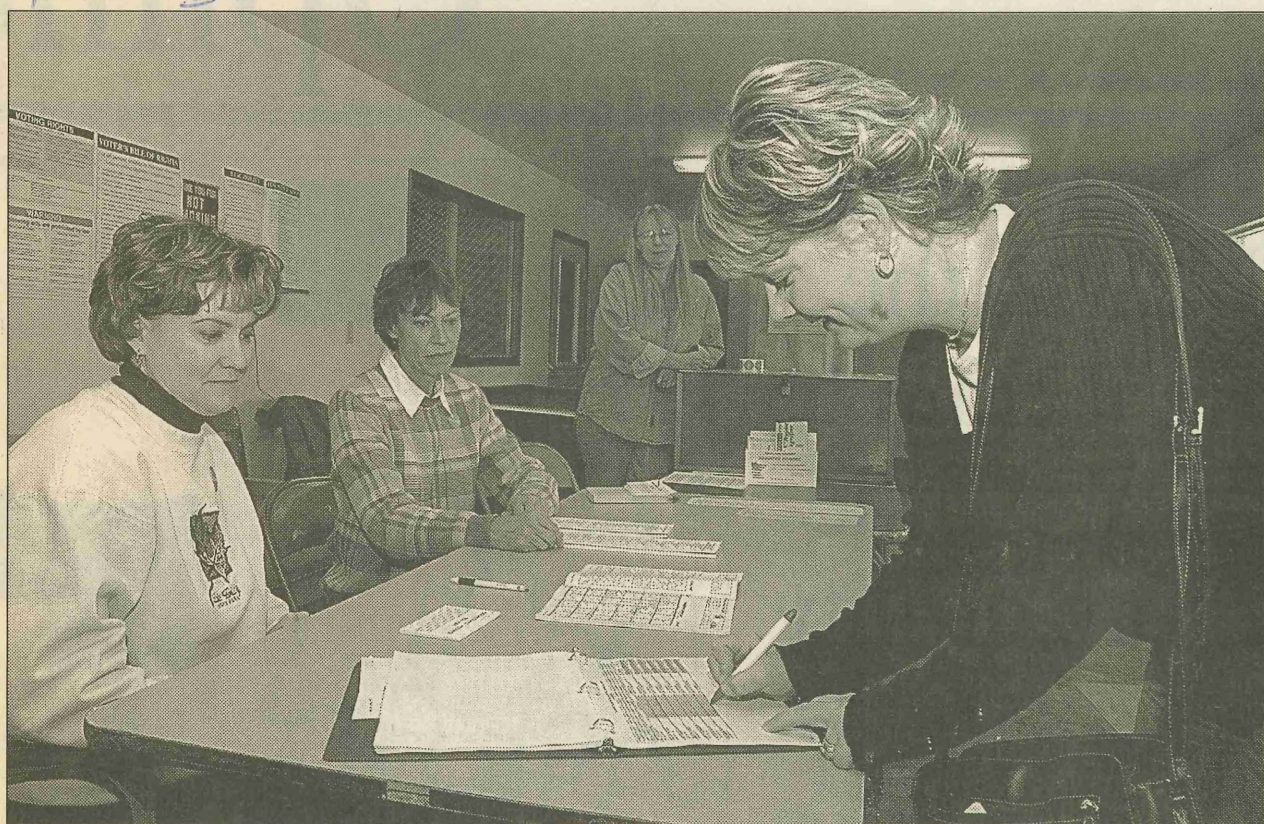
Eligibility is limited to first-year students enrolling in agricultural education at the University of Minnesota or through one of the established partnership programs at Central Lakes College in Brainerd; Ridgewater College in Willmar; South Central Technical College in North Mankato; Minnesota West College at Worthington or the University of Minnesota-Crookston.

A MAELC Scholarship Subcommittee will review applications and select scholarship winners. Applicants will be asked to show "leadership and participation in your high school and/or community life" and outline their career plans. They must also answer an essay question: "Where do you believe agricultural education is heading in the next 25 years and why do you want to be involved in agricultural education in the future?"

WEST CENTRAL TRIBUNE  
WILLMAR, MN  
WEDNESDAY 16,927  
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Tribune photo by Bill Zimmer

Vicky Willander of Clarkfield signs in to vote Tuesday at the Friendship Township polling place in Clarkfield. Election judges Lois Albin, left, Helen Christopherson, and Enola Rolla observe the process.

## House District 20B

By Linda Vanderwerf  
Staff Writer

Neither candidate was ready to claim victory or concede defeat in the House District 20B race.



Koenen

Shortly before midnight, Rep. Lyle Koenen, DFL-Clara City, led challenger Colin Berg 54 percent to 46 percent.

The vote totals of 4,758 for Koenen to 4,076 for Berg left each candidate saying the race could still tighten, because many large precincts had not been reported yet. The cities of Granite Falls, Montevideo and Olivia were not included in the vote totals.

If Koenen maintains that lead, he will return to the Minnesota House for a second term.

"I want to see more numbers," Koenen said in a telephone inter-

view. "We'll have to see what actually happens."

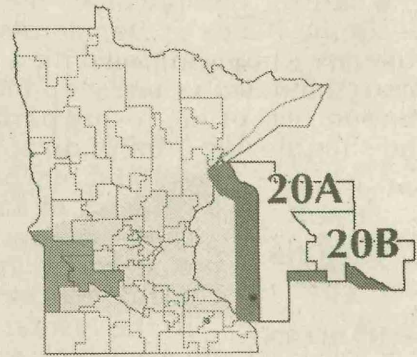
Several thousand votes were still to be counted, he said. While he expected to do well in Granite Falls and Montevideo, he said, he expected that Berg would do well in his home territory of Olivia.

Berg said he, too, wanted to see more returns before commenting.

"I won't say I'm pessimistic; I won't say I'm optimistic," he said. "I'm just cautious."

The candidates have reason to be cautious. The two ran against each other two years ago, when Koenen won by just 255 votes in a race that wasn't decided for nearly a day after the polls closed.

Berg, 46, lives in Olivia and is in the process of starting an agricul-



tural consulting business. Koenen, 48, a farmer, lives in Clara City.

Both men come from political families. Berg's father, Charlie Berg, was a state senator. Koenen's father is a Chippewa County commissioner.

"It's always tough to go up against an incumbent," Berg said. "It was certainly a privilege to run," he said. "It was a good learning experience."

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WILLMAR, MN  
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## DFL endorses Koenen for re-election in 20B

GRANITE FALLS — State Rep. Lyle Koenen, DFL-Maynard, was recently endorsed to run for re-election in District 20B.

The district includes Renville and Chippewa counties and eastern Yellow Medicine County.

Koenen was endorsed by unanimous ballot at the district endorsing convention May 20 in Granite Falls.

Koenen is a first-term legislator and serves as chairman

of the House DFL Rural Caucus. His committee assignments include Agriculture and Rural Development Finance, Agriculture Policy, Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Environment



Koenen

and Natural Resources Policy.





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## Colin Berg running for House in District 20B

OLIVIA — Colin Berg of Olivia plans to run for the Minnesota House of Representatives in District 20B.



Berg

Freshman Rep. Lyle Koenen, DFL-Maynard, currently holds the seat. Berg, a Republican, ran against Koenen in 2002.

"I intend to concentrate on two issues — education and economic development," Berg said in a news release. "We need to pro-

vide both quality educational opportunities and employment opportunities for people of every age and every walk of life."

Berg has a degree in agricultural education from the University of Minnesota and worked as a high school agriculture instructor and a crop consultant for 19 years. For the past four years, he has been a farm business management instructor with Ridgewater College.

Berg is the son of Charlie Berg of Chokio, who served in the Minnesota Senate for 26 years.

INDEPENDENT

MARSHALL, MN  
SATURDAY 7,904  
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## Berg makes bid for District 20B House seat official

OLIVIA — The rematch is official now.

Colin Berg, R-Olivia, said Friday he will run for the state House again in 2004, challenging DFLer Lyle Koenen in District 20B.

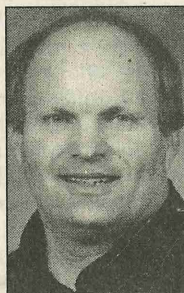
Berg lost to Koenen in the 2002 race.

"The people of the district deserve assertive, resourceful and effective representation," Berg said. "That is why I am seeking the Republican endorsement..."

Berg, the son of longtime state Sen. Charlie Berg, graduated from the University of Minnesota with a degree in agricultural edu-

cation. For 19 years, he worked as a high school agriculture instructor and as a crop consultant. For the last four years, he has been a farm business management instructor with Ridgewater College.

Berg is a member of several ag organizations, including the Minnesota Corn Growers Association, the Minnesota



Berg

Soybean Growers Association, and the Minnesota Farm Bureau. He was a state director for six years in the corn growers association, and currently serves as a soybean association state director.

"I intend to concentrate on

two issues — education and economic development," he said. "We need to provide both quality educational opportunities and employment opportunities for people of every age and every walk of life."



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## House District 20B Koenen, Berg again face off

Incumbent Democrat Rep. Lyle Koenen of Clara City is again facing Republican Colin Berg of Olivia for the House 20B seat. Koenen defeated Berg in 2002.

**Why are you running for this elected position?**

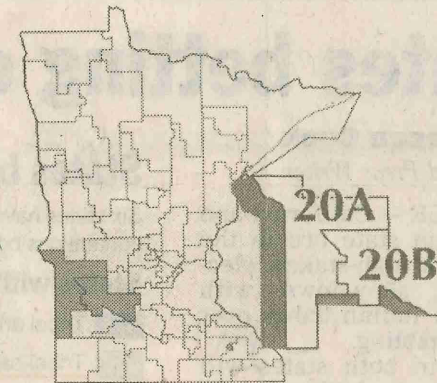
**Berg:** Rural Minnesota needs and deserves strong leadership to allow us to preserve our way of life. Rural leaders need to be outspoken and forceful, yet need to cooperate with others from both sides of the political aisle. Although he is a good person with a big heart, my opponent is neither outspoken nor forceful. I will use my farm background and my experience with public education to better represent this district.

**Koenen:** I consider it an honor and privilege to have been chosen by the people of legislative District 20B to represent them in the Minnesota House of Representatives. I was disappointed with the outcome of the budget balancing process in the 2003 session. The pain was not spread evenly. Rural Minnesota, the elderly, the young, and those unable to care for themselves carried most of the budget-balancing responsibility. This must be corrected.

**Why should voters choose you instead of your opponent?**

**Berg:** My opponent has authored bills that would have been harmful to Minnesota. He proposed an increase in minimum wage, which would have put us at a competitive disadvantage in attracting business. He proposed reducing (eliminating) state income taxes for certain out-state business owners, but not for employees and laborers. He supports socialized health care, which would reduce health care accessibility, significantly increase costs, and create a new level of bureaucracy in state government.

**Koenen:** I enjoy working with peo-



ple from our part of the state on issues important to us. We must address the high cost of prescription drugs and health care, adequately fund our schools, and make college tuition affordable. Working people need good jobs that pay a livable wage. Farmers need open, fair, competitive markets to remain profitable. Roads and communications must be improved and maintained and renewable fuels supported as important factors in economic development.

**What is the single most important issue that you want to tackle if elected?**

**Berg:** The most important issue for western Minnesota is the rural economy, which is affected by the cost of health care and the availability of jobs. Health care costs can be reduced by eliminating unnecessary mandates and making others optional. Jobs help retain existing families and attract new families. Families add to our communities, schools and churches. Job opportunities include promoting Montevideo as an All-American City, Granite Falls Energy LLC, and Olivia's proposed Ag Innovation Center.

**Koenen:** Fairness. Budget cuts hit rural Minnesota harder than the wealthy suburbs. The cost of run-

### Colin Berg

Age: 46  
Family: Wife, Ronda  
Occupation: Agricultural educator and consultant  
Political Experience: Endorsed candidate for state representative in 2002; farm group visits to St. Paul and Washington, D.C.



Berg

### Lyle Koenen

Age: 48  
Family: Wife, Sandy; four sons  
Occupation: Legislator, truck driver, school bus driver, grain and livestock farmer for 27 years  
Political Experience: Freshman in the Minnesota House of Representatives, first elected in 2002; serve on the Agriculture and Rural Development Finance, Agriculture Policy, Environmental and Natural Resources Finance, and Environment and Natural Resources Policy committees.



Koenen

ning the state is going down (state and local tax revenue/personal income). Still we pay more taxes (income, property, and sales tax). Budget cuts are increasing our local property tax. Households making \$500,000 and above pay 8.4 percent of their income in taxes. The rest of us, 99 percent in 20B, pay 11 to 12 percent of our income in taxes.