

# For new DFLer, thoughtfulness is the name of the game

By Jon Fure

The 1998 election was a satisfying one for Rep. Ann Lenczewski (DFL-Bloomington). Not only did she win as a DFLer in a tradition-



Rep. Ann Lenczewski

ally Republican district, she was the only member of her party statewide to gain a seat that was last held by a Republican.

And she did it with a name that doesn't exactly lend itself to catchy slogans.

"People have said for years that I should change my name," she said. "But I like my name. I think it's interesting."

Her husband's name is Nels Erickson, and Lenczewski said her decision to keep her surname was not some sort of statement. She would have been just as happy to be known as Ann Erickson, but she's learned to like having a name that makes her stand out in a crowd.

"I talked to him and said I was thinking about keeping my name, and he said, 'That's fine, just don't ask me to take it,'" she recalled. "But if he had had a problem with it, I would have changed it."

Bloomington residents have gotten used to seeing and hearing Lenczewski's name. She had been on the city council there for five years. Still, she had her name spelled phonetically (len-CHESS-key) on her campaign signs so her supporters could all pronounce the name they checked on the ballot.

As a city council member, Lenczewski also

stood out because she was always the only Democrat, but that never bothered her.

"I'm not a very partisan person," she said. "I'm used to working with Republicans."

Her main goals as a House member are to study hard and make informed, logical decisions — instead of having a biased agenda or making a decision before listening to the debate.

"I love public policy," she said. "I enjoy the debate of public policy. And being on the council heightened my awareness, seeing how much the state was influencing what we tried to accomplish as a council."

She became interested in holding public office when she began serving on some local advisory commissions and task forces.

"I looked at the elected body and said to myself, 'I could do that,'" she said. "It always looks like an easier job from the outside."

She got into politics to do what she can to improve people's lives.

"I know that sounds corny, but that's been my experience with elected officials, both Republicans and Democrats," she said. "No matter how conservative or liberal you are, you really are trying to make things better for people. I know people don't always believe that, but I really have found that to be true most of the time."

She credits her parents for influencing her interest in public policy. Her mother was valedictorian at the College of St. Catherine and later earned a graduate degree in a time when not many women attended to college. Her father earned several graduate degrees and

taught in the Edina school district, so education and related issues were frequent topics of discussion at the Lenczewski dinner table.

Lenczewski has a bachelor's degree in psychology from the College of St. Benedict and studied at the University of Minnesota's Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs.

She is a lifelong Bloomington resident, a graduate of Thomas Jefferson Senior High School, and she has four children ages 2, 6, 8, and 9.

As a member of the House Taxes Committee, Lenczewski said she is proud to have been a part of the bipartisan effort to fast track HF1, a tax rebate bill passed by the House Feb. 4. She said she feels fortunate to be on the tax panel, which is an uncommon assignment for a freshman lawmaker.

With returning the state tax surplus to residents being in the forefront at the Legislature this year, Lenczewski said she has been told the taxes committee is working at a faster pace than usual. She also serves on the Property Taxes Division of the Taxes Committee, as well as the House Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs, Transportation Finance, and Transportation Policy committees.

**District 40B**

**1995 population:** 32,499  
**Largest city:** Bloomington  
**County:** Hennepin  
**Location:** southwestern metro  
**Top concern:** "To work as bipartisanly as possible in a very partisan environment, and to stay in touch with people in my district."  
— Rep. Ann Lenczewski

## NOTES

"Anybody got a soldering gun?" asked Rep. Sherry Broecker (R-Vadnais Heights), popping up from behind the sound system control panel with a pen knife in one hand and tape in the other.

Unfortunately, the lawmakers and lobbyists waiting for the start of the House Crime Prevention Committee meeting Feb. 9 just shrugged their shoulders. Broecker, acting as committee chair while Rep. Rich Stanek (R-Maple Grove) recovered from surgery, couldn't start the meeting because of a short in the system that records the meetings. Broecker finally got the system working with the help of a page who held the wires together throughout the meeting.

**Gov. Jesse Ventura has announced** that he will give his State of the State Address at noon March 2 in the House chamber.

Traditionally, governors have made their speeches nearer the beginning of the legislative session, but Ventura, who ad-libbed his brief inaugural speech, has been slow in committing to a date. Perhaps he has been preparing some notes on the \$23 billion budget he released a couple weeks ago.

The governor will address members of the House and Senate, and there is limited seating for members of the public in the House gallery.

**During a Feb. 11 hearing on a bill** that would exempt tickets for Minnesota State High School League events from sales taxes, several members of the House Taxes Committee wondered what the league would do with the money saved.

David Stead, the league's executive director, assured the committee the money would be returned to member schools.

"I think I can guarantee that they won't use it to raise the salaries for referees," said the bill's sponsor, Rep. Loren Solberg (DFL-Bovey), noting the presence of House Speaker Steven Sviggum, who has been a referee for events sponsored by the league over the years.

Sviggum said he was pleased to hear that and added he supported the bill.