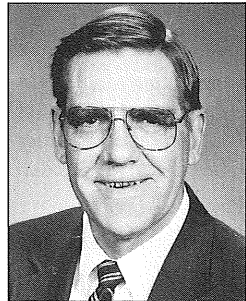


Ness seeks less government, more efficiency

"A genuine interest in public service" is what led Rep. Robert Ness (IR-Dassel) to run for the Legislature when the District 20A seat opened last year.



Rep. Robert Ness

The previous year, Ness, 57, retired following a 34-year career in education: 21 years as superintendent, 10 years as a principal, and 3 years as an industrial arts and health teacher. He is well acquainted with the effects that state funding and regulations have on education. The recessionary year of 1982 was a particularly tough one, when hundreds of changes in government mandates, rules, and regulations had to be implemented, he said. At the same time, budget cuts forced the layoff of 50 employees in his district along with other cuts.

"I have had a growing concern about the amount of government in every phase of our life in our society," Ness said.

He is also concerned that government needs to

be more efficient. He cites, for example, a state Department of Natural Resources (DNR) program that provides free fishing licenses to senior citizens — but only if they first pay for the \$4.50 license, save their receipt, and mail it to the DNR for a refund check. This reimbursement program also affects nursing home residents who may only go fishing once or twice a year, he noted.

"There's certainly a need for the government to assist for the betterment of the people and for the common good," Ness said. But, he added, when government goes too far, creativity and the entrepreneurial spirit are stifled.

Ness believes the breadth of his experience helped convince voters that he was the most qualified for the job. He grew up on a family farm and earned his master's and specialist degrees in education from the University of Minnesota. His present work, as a construction manager and consultant, gives him an appreciation of business interests. He and his wife Marianne have four grown children, three of whom work in the medical field — two as dentists and one as a surgeon — giving him a special familiarity with health care.

One of Ness' chief goals is to stimulate the rural economy. That goal coincides with his emphasis

on family values. People who commute an hour or more each way to daily jobs pay a price far greater than the cost of gasoline, he noted. A price is also paid in terms of time stolen from family life and community, school and church involvement.

"There's just no energy left," he observed. "It's not in the best interest of the state to require people to move or have to commute to make a living. We need to help the rural economy in every way we possibly can."

— Ruth Hammond

District 20A

Population: 32,916

Counties: McLeod, Meeker, Stearns, Wright

Largest city: Hutchinson

Location: South central Minnesota

Largest employer: Litchfield Precision Co.,
325 employees

Topography: District almost evenly split between urban and rural areas with 17,564 residents (53.4 percent) living inside an incorporated city.

1992 presidential election results:

Bush/Quayle: 36.1 percent

Clinton/Gore: 34.1 percent

Perot/Stockdale: 29.4 percent

Other: 0.4 percent