

An educator with passion

Swails continues her public service

By **PATTY OSTBERG**

Not many people can say they grew up just streets away from a former U.S. president, but Rep. Marsha Swails (DFL-Woodbury) can.



Rep. Marsha Swails

or reading.

That accessibility left a lasting impression.

“I never felt that public service was something odd to pursue,” said Swails, who believes the greatest thing a person can do is serve others.

A teacher for 22 years, including as an

As a junior high school student in Independence, Mo. her school bus drove by Harry Truman’s house every day. Looking out the left side window she would see him sitting at his desk in front of his picture window writing

Advanced Placement English instructor since 1999, her political aspirations emerged when she attended her first district caucus during the 2004 elections. Surrounded by neighbors with similar political passions, she said they encouraged her to run for office. Swails didn’t want to give up teaching so she spoke with several legislators who were also teachers. They convinced her it’s possible to do both.

“All my life I’ve felt that serving others was what I should do ... I see this as an extension of that core value,” said Swails, the 2004 Woodbury Chamber of Commerce Teacher of the Year.

After hours of door-knocking and meeting thousands of constituents, she defeated incumbent Rep. Karen Klinzing, also a teacher, by 2.3 percent of the vote.

Swails said the issues most important to her district include quality education for children, affordable health care and transportation.

DISTRICT 56B

2002 population: 36,683

Largest city: Woodbury

County: Washington

Top concern: Education

There are simple fixes for transportation, even if that means rescheduling a few bus routes. “They don’t have to be multimillion dollar road projects or light-rail, but we can implement short-term solutions to make lives better,” Swails said.

Her background as a teacher makes her well-suited for her seats on the House E-12 Education Committee and the K-12 Finance Division.

Her other committee assignments include Housing Policy and Finance and Public Health Finance Division, Labor and Consumer Protection Division, and she is vice chairwoman of the House Ways and Means Committee.