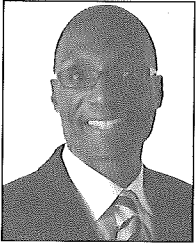


# Facing complex problems

## For Champion, jobs are the starting point

By LEE ANN SCHUTZ

Too many streets in north Minneapolis are dotted with homes in foreclosure, making the housing crisis very real for Rep. Bobby



Rep.  
Bobby Joe Champion

Joe Champion (DFL-Mpls).

The housing issue is among a host of “complex problems” faced by his constituents, Champion said. An attorney, born and raised in his district, he hadn’t considered running for public office, but the

issues brought him to his own personal “crossroads”: be part of the solution or keep hoping someone else would step in and work for change.

“I felt like we needed a voice that was going to seek to make sure that issues important to

our district are at least on the table,” he said.

The issues facing his district are interwoven, but it all starts with jobs or, more specifically, the lack of available work for many of his constituents. “If I don’t have a job, I don’t have housing. And I can’t pay for medical expenses or for my child to go to college,” he said.

Transportation can be a problem for those seeking work as well. Over the years, the job growth in the Twin Cities metropolitan area has occurred primarily in the suburbs. His district’s transportation needs are not well served, he said, and those relying on public transportation may not be able to get to the jobs.

Public safety is part of the mix, too, he said. Crime can stigmatize a neighborhood and make it an undesirable place to live if people perceive it is unsafe, no matter how affordable the housing. “We can’t arrest the problem away; we need to make substantial

## DISTRICT 58B

Population: (2007 est.) 36,687

Largest City: Minneapolis

County: Hennepin

Top Concerns: Housing, jobs, education and public safety

investments in the lives of people,” he said.

Married and the father of three, Champion’s law career has been diverse. He has served as an assistant attorney general under Skip Humphrey and Mike Hatch, and in-house counsel to music producers Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis. But it is his involvement with several community organizations that prompts him to further his community to action.

A firm believer in communicating to face challenges, he plans to increase the number of town hall meetings; and at the Legislature, he sees the importance of reaching across the aisle to improve the quality of life for people in his district.