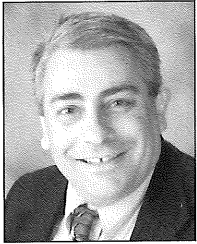


Professor turned legislator

Banaian goes from the classroom to the House

By **PATTY OSTBERG**

Rep. King Banaian (R-St. Cloud) won his election by just 10 votes. It was a race he wasn't sure he wanted to be a part of until the past few years.



Rep. King Banaian

"I was not one of those people that wanted to be involved in politics all along," he said. "I'm a tenured full professor. I have a nice quiet life. I have an office that is so peaceful. ... I ran

because I thought I could help do something with budgeting. I feel that's the No. 1 issue."

That only seems natural for Banaian, an economics professor for more than 25 years.

"Economics is always about presenting alternatives. What's new for me is I was always

the person who presented the alternatives, but it was always someone else who had to choose."

In 2002, he started a blog that was initially to be about higher education and then "dveled into politics." While hosting a conservative radio show for six years Banaian thought he might make a good legislator.

Banaian ran his campaign on the premise that his first bill would address the state's budget process. He sponsors HF2, which would require state agencies and the Legislature to implement zero-based budgeting. It will help agencies identify activities they shouldn't be doing, and by zeroing them out, "you can make some gains pretty quickly," Banaian said.

A basic principle used by some personal finance coaches supports his belief that the

DISTRICT 15B	
Population (2009 est.):	36,573
Largest City:	St. Cloud
Counties:	Benton, Stearns, Sherburne
Top Concern:	The budget process

state budget can be balanced without a tax increase. "You have an envelope and put dollars into that envelope and when you are out of dollars, that's it," he said.

Other issues that are important to his district include transportation, especially roads and a local airport that lacks commercial service; bonding projects; development of a main street; and declining enrollment in the school district.

Banaian said he will maintain focus on the job at hand and make sure his "ego is buried... It's an honor to be here, nobody owes you that chair. You owe a lot to everybody else that got you to that chair."