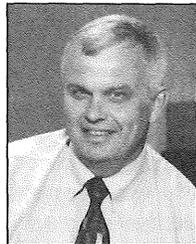


# From the farm to the city

Eastlund brings agrarian heritage from rapidly developing greater Minnesota district to the Capitol

BY MICHELLE KIBIGER

For more than a century, Rep. Rob Eastlund's (R-Isanti) family has worked and lived on the land where he now lives in Isanti County.



Rep. Rob Eastlund

But today it is a different community than it was when his great-grandfather made his original land purchase. Now it struggles to balance the forces of development with its traditional agrarian roots.

And as a newly elected representative to the area, Eastlund says he will be mindful of those issues.

"The area is growing. ... That's just dramatic compared to the feelings of attachment to the way things were," Eastlund said. "Everybody was in town and all the farmers were there.

His goal is to stay connected to that community despite making daily trips from home to the State Capitol.

"I want to introduce programs so that it makes life better for future generations," he said.

The 2000 election was not Eastlund's first taste of politics. He was a member of the Cambridge/Isanti School Board for 12 years — beginning with his oldest daughter's year in kindergarten. In addition, Eastlund ran for the House of Representatives two previous times, in 1988 and 1990.

When former Rep. Jim Rostberg decided that he wouldn't run again, Eastlund decided it was time to try another House run. It seemed to be the right time for the father of three, whose youngest child is now a senior in high school.

"My whole family is looking forward to it and they're all at a place where they can appreciate it," Eastlund said.

*"I think this is just a great opportunity. I think it's a great challenge to be a part, to learn how the system works."*

—Rep. Rob Eastlund

You knew everybody. You waved at everybody. You knew their dog's name. And that's gone."

Eastlund, 51, a former center on the University of Minnesota football team, stayed in the area and ran a dairy and corn farm on his father's land for 15 years. He currently manages commercial property in the area, so the nature of the rapidly growing and developing community greet him every day.

Eastlund expects his job as a legislator to be challenging, but he's pretty sure nothing can compare to the difficulties of running a successful campaign. He says that listening to the concerns of his community during the campaign has prepared him for that job.

"I think this is just a great opportunity," Eastlund said. "I think it's a great challenge to be a part, to learn how the system works."

Eastlund plans to make the 52-mile trek to the Capitol every day during the session, even though he qualifies as an outstate legislator and can receive a housing allowance. He says that will help him have more regular contact with his constituents.

"I want to go to basketball games (his son plays), and I want to be visible in the community," he said.

Eastlund believes several issues will be big during the 2000 session, many of which have a direct effect on his community. Among them are K-12 funding issues, health care issues, such as funding for long-term and senior care, and tax issues, including the changing nature of property taxes and other ways communities can fund development.

Lingering amid all these issues are the rural/urban struggles, such as longer commutes, sprawl, and evolving education needs from K-12 to higher education. Eastlund said he plans to keep a watchful eye on how those issues develop during the session.

"It's a city meets country kind of thing," Eastlund said. "It creates tensions."

## DISTRICT 18A

**1998 population (estimate):** 36,449

**Largest city:** Cambridge

**Counties:** Isanti, Kanabec

**Location:** About 50 miles north of St. Paul

**Top concern:** "I think my top priority is to learn. What I want to do is understand how the process works before (I) jump in and make a big splash. I want to be sensitive to the issues the people in my community bring."

—Rep. Rob Eastlund

## Frequently called numbers

(Area code 651)

### Secretary of the Senate

231 Capitol ..... 296-2343

Voice mail/order bills ..... 296-2343

### Chief Clerk of the House

211 Capitol ..... 296-2314

### Index, Senate

110 Capitol ..... 296-5560

### Index, House

211 Capitol ..... 296-6646

### Information, Senate

231 Capitol ..... 296-0504

### Information, House

175 State Office Building ..... 296-2146

TTY, Senate ..... 296-0250

Toll free ..... 1-888-234-1112

TTY, House ..... 296-9896

Toll free ..... 1-800-657-3550