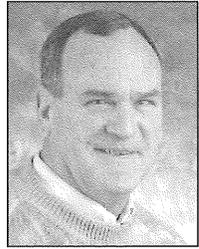


# Fighting for education

## Wardlow hopes teaching experience will help in legislative efforts to improve things for those in the profession

By **MIKE COOK**

For someone who had never previously sought political office, Rep. Lynn Wardlow (R-Eagan) has some big shoes to fill.



Rep. Lynn Wardlow

The Republican replaces Gov. Tim Pawlenty as the representative for much of eastern and southern Eagan. "Thank God I didn't lose because he's now the governor," he said with a laugh at a New Member Orientation session.

Still Wardlow hopes to be as effective as his predecessor.

"He's smart, articulate, understands the issues, has a passion, and a tender heart for the common man," Wardlow said. "Just to come close to representing the district like he did is my goal."

And it's not as though Wardlow has not been involved politically, though this was his first time as a candidate.

Having helped U.S. Rep. John Kline on two campaigns, Wardlow was content to help out for a third time. Then he received a phone call from Rep. Tim Wilkin (R-Eagan) last February encouraging him to run.

"I was trying to help recruit a successor for (Pawlenty) and I was looking over a list of delegates and community activists and Lynn's name was there," Wilkin said. He also knew of Wardlow's teaching career, military background, and how he was well known to many residents. "When I called him, I don't think he had really thought about running. I could almost hear him fall off his chair," Wilkin said.

At the time of the call Wardlow said, "My wife, Sheryl, is laying on the couch asleep, but she kind of woke up and asked 'What was that all about?' I said that they want me to run for office. I remember her eyes got to about the size of silver dollars when she asked what I was

going to do. I had told Tim to 'Let me think about it and I'll call you back.'"

Wardlow said Wilkin later told him "I was so thankful to get a maybe."

"I think Lynn was at a perfect time in his life to run," Wilkin said, knowing that Wardlow was about to retire from teaching and he had an interest in politics. "I think he just needed a spark."

A decorated Marine Corps veteran, who spent 29 years fighting for his country, including 26 combat missions in Vietnam, Wardlow also got a push from his two sons, Jason, a Marine Corps pilot, and Doug, who is studying law at Georgetown University.

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— Rep. Lynn Wardlow

"They used to tell me 'Dad you should run for office,'" Wardlow said. "Doug told me 'Dad if you don't do it I'm going to come home and run for the seat,' and I said 'No, you're staying in school.'"

Once in the race, Wardlow found it tough to secure the party endorsement — needing nine rounds of balloting to do so. Yet, he won the general election with 52.6 percent of the vote. The race had four candidates, including the person he defeated for the Republican endorsement who ran as the Independence Party candidate.

Wardlow also got some help from Laura Bush. The First Lady appeared at an Eagan High School rally for U.S. Sen. Norm Coleman three days before the election, and an admittedly nervous Wardlow got to introduce her because of his belief in improving educational opportunities for all. "At the end of it I got a thundering standing ovation that felt really good," Wardlow said.

A mathematics instructor for more than 31 years, mostly at the middle-school level, Wardlow is all too aware of the issues facing today's educators. "I support teachers and will do what I can to help," he says. Before retiring in December, Wardlow was also a wrestling and football coach.

He said many teachers, including those who are not Republican, said they would vote for him because of his willingness to fight for them. "I always told them I would do my best to help them, but I couldn't make any promises."

Wardlow campaigned on local control, equitable school funding, the replacement of the Profile of Learning, and helping small businesses.

Serving on the House Education Finance and Education Policy committees gives Wardlow an opportunity to work on many of those issues. He also serves on the House Civil Law Committee.

Wardlow does not want to hurt people when

the Legislature deals with the deficit for the next biennium, but he said that he sadly knows his vote may likely do just that. "This is a tough decision to make. It'll be difficult, and it'll take a lot of talking and probably a lot of arguing."

### DISTRICT 38B

**2002 population:** 36,661

**Largest city:** Eagan

**County:** Dakota

**Location:** southern Twin Cities metropolitan area

**Top concern:** "Education is my number one issue and number one and a half is civil law."

— Rep. Lynn Wardlow