

New members . . .

## Chaudhary plows new ground in election to House

Rep. Satveer Chaudhary (DFL-Fridley) displayed both a sense of history and a sense of humor when commenting on his election to the Minnesota Legislature. "When was



Rep.  
Satveer Chaudhary

the last time a tall, skinny, left-handed, balding, Gemini was elected in Minnesota?" he asked. The answer: "Hubert Humphrey."

Satveer Chaudhary (pronounced SUT-veer CHAW-dree) has made history in another way as well. He is the first Asian Indian elected to public office in Minnesota, and only the fourth person of Asian Indian heritage to hold public office nationwide. His election was covered by the U.S. Indian press and by a prominent Indian news magazine.

"It is a source of pride to the Asian community and I'm happy to be part of that," Chaudhary said. "It is especially good for the children to see that they can be proud of their heritage."

Chaudhary's parents immigrated from India in 1966. His father, S.P.S. Chaudhary, is a retired inspector with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The story of how he got that job became a frequently told story in the Chaudhary family. "My dad was a Ph.D. student at the University of Minnesota and, being a new immigrant, was having a hard time finding a job," Chaudhary said. "He decided to utilize the American system and write to his U.S. senator. Hubert Humphrey called him back and said that there was no reason why my dad, if he was a qualified veterinarian, shouldn't work for the USDA."

Chaudhary's mother, Raj, owns an import firm. "I definitely get my business sense

and political savvy from her," he said. "Both of my parents taught us to never forget how we began."

Though only 27 years old, Chaudhary already has a decade of political involvement under his belt. "I've been pretty much a political animal since high school. My senior government teacher at Columbia Heights [Jack Gause] got us involved. The first campaign I ever worked on was for Rep. Alice Johnson (DFL-Spring Lake Park) in 1986," Chaudhary said. "It was a great honor to co-sponsor [legislation] HF1 with her 10 years later."

Chaudhary has been involved in DFL politics ever since. As an undergraduate, he was in the student senate at St. Olaf College and lobbied for the state student coalition. He also worked for Attorney General Skip Humphrey's office doing outreach. "After college, I worked for Sen. (Ted) Kennedy in Washington, D.C. for a few months," Chaudhary said. "That was a tremendous experience."

In 1992, Chaudhary took a year off from academics to work on the Tom Harkin presidential campaign and Gerry Sikorski's last 6th District congressional race. Both candidates lost, but "that experience provided some important political lessons," Chaudhary said.

"During law school, I became more involved with my own community," he said. "I started speaking to Columbia Heights [High School] social studies classes about the importance of being involved with government. I also joined the Columbia Heights Lions Club and the Fridley Kiwanis, and became a member of the Fridley Human Resources Commission."

Chaudhary's first run for office came when

he was just two weeks out of law school. He ran in a July 1995 special election primary for the District 52A legislative seat, a Minneapolis suburban area that includes parts of Fridley and New Brighton and all of Columbia Heights and Hilltop. Chaudhary lost that race, but came back to defeat the winner, Republican Skip Carlson, in 1996.

"The district really needed a strong representative for working families," Chaudhary said. "On top of the district's agenda are education, crime, taxes, welfare reform, and affordable health care. We're an inner ring suburban area and are facing a lot of pressures."

Chaudhary is especially interested in education and economic development. "Without education you have higher crime and without economic development you have a weak tax base," he said.

The other constituency Chaudhary expects to hear from is Minnesota's Asian community. "I've already had some contacts from the Hmong community," he said. "I hope other Asian groups will bring me their concerns as well."

— Steve Compton

### District 52A

1996 population: 33,290

Largest city: Fridley

Counties: Anoka, Ramsey

Location: northwestern metro area

Top concern: "On top of the district's agenda are education, crime, taxes, welfare reform, and affordable health care. We're an inner ring suburban area and are facing a lot of pressures."

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### NOTES

Staff of the Criminal Justice Center at Minnesota Planning presented a host of 1995 statistics to the House Judiciary Committee Jan. 27:

- Individuals aged 10 to 24 years old comprised 21 percent of the state's population, but accounted for 69 percent of all

arrests for violent and other serious crimes. In the seven-county metropolitan area, that population, numbered at 470,760 in 1995, is expected to grow to 552,210 by 2005, after which it will begin to decline. In the other 80 counties, that population, numbered at 323,680 in 1995, will peak at 489,040 in 2000, then begin to decline.

- The number of arrests and apprehensions for all crimes — serious and minor — rose from 144,211 in 1985 to 231,049 in

1995. Less serious crimes accounted for 179,782 of the arrests and apprehensions in 1995.

- While males accounted for 74 percent of arrests and apprehensions for the most serious crimes, females showed the greatest increase: 36 percent since 1985.
- Nationwide, juvenile arrests for violent crime increased 107 percent in the 10 years leading to 1995; adult arrests rose by 81 percent. Those numbers are similar to Minnesota's.