

POLITICS IN MINNESOTA

A newsletter that gives you the insiders' look at Minnesota politics. Written and edited by two of the state's most experienced public affairs consultants, Wy Spano and D.J. Leary.

LEGISLATOR OF THE YEAR

Choosing legislator of the year is always a difficult task. Naturally, the leadership comes immediately to mind. Despite what **Rudy Perpich** says. Speaker **Bob Vanasek** had his caucus firmly under control throughout the session. Both **Vanasek** and Majority Leader **Roger Moe** guided their bodies toward keeping property taxes in check and both got that job done, whether **Rudy Perpich** signs on or not. But legislative leaders also get considered in our Politician of the Year, so we'll leave them to that.

Two names were mentioned over and over when we asked our sources for legislator of the year. One was ol' Trapper Bob, Sen. **Bob Lessard** (DFL-International Falls). **Lessard** authored two of the toughest bills of the session, lottery and SCORE--the recycling bill. In both cases **Lessard** faced an often hostile Senate but somehow he kept maneuvering and kept the issues alive.

The other name we kept getting, and our choice for Legislator of the Year, is **Joe Quinn** (DFL-Coon Rapids). Like **Lessard**, **Quinn** was given lottery responsibility. Granted he had a little better overall support to work with in the House, but he worked his support well and crafted a bill which could work and could deliver a successful lottery. In conference, it was the House bill which mostly prevailed. **Quinn** is close to Speaker **Bob Vanasek**, and two things that he did for **Vanasek** added to his luster this year. One was his work as Speaker Pro Tern, the person who sits in the chair directing traffic when the Speaker himself is otherwise engaged. Sometimes the Speaker Pro Tern is in the chair because the Speaker is busy; sometimes he's there because the Speaker is ducking a sticky debate. Whatever the reason he was up there, **Quinn** kept his legendary temper in check all year and Democrats and Republicans ended the session praising his firmness and fairness. But from our vantage point **Quinn's** shining moment during the '89 session was his speech to the veterans' organizations who had come to lobby for vets nursing homes and to beat back a charitable gambling tax. **Quinn** stood in for **Vanasek** and told the vets that they were wrong about the gambling tax and the money was needed for education. It was a gutsy and classy moment for our 1989 legislator of the year.