

Hayden, Champion express gratitude

Written by Batala McFarlane
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State Reps. Bobby Joe Champion (DFL-58B) and Jeff Hayden (DFL-61B) were sworn in to the Minnesota House of Representatives last week Tuesday, Jan. 6. Champion replaces Willie Dominguez who served one term while Hayden replaces Neva Walker, who held the seat for four terms.

“I’m honored by the opportunity to represent my neighbors and my community in the Minnesota House of Representatives,” said Champion, an attorney. “One of the most important ways to make a difference in our community is to make sure our voices are heard. I look forward to making sure north Minneapolis has a strong voice as we begin to tackle the tough issues confronting us.”

Hayden said: “It’s an honor and privilege to represent District 61B in the Minnesota House of Representatives. I am humbled by the support I have received from the community and am eager to get to work at the State Capitol to be a strong voice and advocate for South Minneapolis.”

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Deputy Mayor Hayden expressed his gratitude for the support of the community in the budget process, and Mayor Champion expressed his gratitude for the support of the community in the budget process.

Gov. Tim Pawlenty released his plan to eliminate the state's \$356 million shortfall last November. The plan calls for \$171 million in permanent spending reductions, \$297 million in one-time monies, and a \$112 million cushion in case the economy continues to sour, the country finds itself at war, or revenues are down for some other reason.

According to information released by the state, of the spending cuts, \$77 million is in state agency grants program, \$44 million is in state agency operations, and \$50 million will come from higher education. One-time items include: \$130 million for transportation projects will instead be funded through borrowing, \$50 million from a delay in sales tax refunds on capital equipment purchases, and \$39 million from the 21st Century Minerals Fund, used to promote economic development on the Iron Range.

“There are so many critical issues facing our communities,” said Champion whose district is composed primarily of North Minneapolis. “Jobs are needed to deal with issues of housing and healthcare. If you don’t have access to housing, then you have an issue with stability ... all of these issues are inter-connected.

“In this current session we will discuss what’s going to be cut from the budget in order to balance the budget,” said Champion noting that while cuts must be made, “they need to be done while lessening the impact on the most vulnerable and while still investing in the future.”

Sharing the same concern, Hayden said, “We want to make sure people understand that things are going to be tight.” He said that poor and communities of color will be hit hardest by the

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budget cuts. “The cuts this session will be deep –there will be no cost shifting. Because the Governor more than likely will not touch K-12 funding, cuts may come from Health and Human Services which will impact Minneapolis constituents heavily –there may be a 25%-35% cut in that area.”

Both Champion and Hayden are encouraging constituents to contact them. Champion will hold monthly town hall meetings in his district. The first is scheduled for Tuesday, Jan. 13, 6 pm at the Minneapolis Urban League, 2100 Plymouth Avenue North for a preview of the 2009 session and a discussion of the state budget deficit. Guest presenter for this town hall is Bill Marx, Minnesota House of Representatives Chief Fiscal Analyst.

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