

## GOP names challenger to Sheran

By Mark Fischenich

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Republicans meeting in St.

Peter Thursday night endorsed an opponent for Sen. Kathy Sheran, DFL-Mankato, and gave their blessing to a previously announced candidate to run against Rep. Terry Morrow, DFL-St. Peter.

And earlier this week, Republicans in the Waseca-Owatonna House district replaced an earlier candidate who dropped out of the race.

The actions filled the last empty slots in south- central Minnesota legislative races for the Republican Party.

Democrats are still looking to fill several holes in their slate of legislative candidates in the nine counties around Mankato.

The differences in the candidate recruitment process is probably partly a sign of Republicans' high hopes for the 2010 election, and that was a factor in Peter Trocke deciding to run against Sheran.

" This is a good year for a conservative message," said Trocke, co- chair of the Nicollet County Republican Party, a car salesman at Lager's Inc. in St.

Peter and an auctioneer.

Trocke said he's thought about running for office for years and has been active in the local party for about 10 years, working as treasurer for Mike Bidwell — a North Mankato car salesman who ran unsuccessfully against Morrow in

2008.

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Peter Trocke is the Republican endorsed candidate to run against Sen. Kathy Sheran.

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## TROCKE: Grew up on a dairy farm

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The struggling economy spurred Trocke's decision to run this year, as well. Three car dealerships have closed in the district and the list of home foreclosures in local newspapers began to show familiar names.

"It hits close to home when you start reading names in there of people you know, and it hits closer to home when the names are of relatives," he said.

His campaign will be focused on job creation and the importance of lower taxes. Senate District 23 includes all of Nicollet County, other than a single neighborhood in lower North Mankato, and much of Sibley County.

Trocke grew up on a Sibley County dairy farm in New Auburn Township, providing him with a connection to that part of the district.

"So I know Sibley County, I know agriculture," he said. "I think I'm a good fit for the district."

Trocke and Rebecca Peichel, a recent college graduate who grew up on a farm in western Nicollet County, were unopposed and endorsed unanimously. Peichel announced her challenge to Morrow last week.

In District 26A, David Thul of Owatonna received the Republican endorsement Monday night after previously endorsed candidate Brandon Pofahl withdrew after two months as the GOP choice against freshman Rep. Kory Kath, DFL- Owatonna.

Thul is a member of the Minnesota National Guard, has been active in the local tea party movement and was co-chairman of the Steele County Republican Party. He ran for an at-large seat on the Owatonna City Council last November, finishing fifth out of six candidates.

The filing deadline for House and Senate candidates is 5 p. m. Tuesday.