

REPRESENTATIVES

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He also believes the state should end mandatory annual inspections of most passenger vehicles and should allow teenagers to obtain driving permits earlier.

Dotson, who specifically accused Binger of being ineffective on his chosen committees, has requested assignment to two of the same: Agriculture and State Parks, and Recreation and Natural Resources.

He also has sought assignment to the Commerce Committee and either Education and Transportation Appropriations or Elementary and Secondary Education.

Dotson hopes early on to participate in the fight for extended-area telephone service in rural areas and to begin work on a program encouraging the startup of refuse recycling businesses.

The important committee assignments will be doled out by House Speaker Bob Griffin before the Jan. 4 swearing-in ceremonies for all House members, including a freshman class of 25.

Theoretically, Dotson should have an advantage over Ross, because he is a Democrat, the majority party in the House.

Ross, however, shows no sign of reluctance to buck the Republican mainstream if the party's initiatives conflict with his personal agenda.

He notes that the GOP has enough seats in the House to sustain a veto by Republican Gov. John Ashcroft. But he also says party leaders have encouraged him not to get caught up in partisan politics.

"That was good news to me, because I wasn't going to do it anyway," he says.

Ross seems intent upon following the lead of his predecessor in the 49th District, Derek Holland, who was well-respected as a GOP rebel before he abandoned his seat to run for lieutenant governor.

On the other side of the aisle, Dotson defeated a Democratic incumbent whose disagreements with his own party were viewed far more seriously and gave him the reputation of an unwelcome outsider.

Dotson clearly is not interested in

earning that sort of reputation for himself.

"When you join a team, you may have great respect for members of the opposition team, but you're still pulling for your side to win," he says.

Despite all their differences, Ross and Dotson agree on one thing: The election of the two Blue Springs representatives could signal the start of a political heyday for the community.

Ross sees he and Dotson drafting bipartisan legislation on behalf of Blue Springs and then lobbying their respective parties for its passage.

"Blue Springs is a win-win situation," he says.

Dotson agrees that that could work on certain types of legislation, but he cautions that both he and Ross also represent other substantial portions of Eastern Jackson County.

Included in Dotson's district are Oak Grove, Grain Valley, Lake Tapawingo, Buckner and a part of eastern Independence. Ross's district includes Lone Jack, Greenwood, Lake Lotawana and healthy portions of Lee's Summit and Independence.

"We're not going to be able to be parochial in the sense that our town is it," Dotson says. "There are other people to consider."

Although neither is sure when he might produce his first piece of legislation, Dotson believes it will probably take him one session alone to become acclimated to Jefferson City.

Ross? One month.

Ross says the most important personal traits for a freshman lawmaker to take to Jefferson City are personality and the ability to communicate.

"You don't have to be the smartest person in the world, but if you've got those, you can deal with people," he says. "The secret is to know who to go to when you've got a problem."

Dotson says it is most important for a freshman to possess an ability to learn and a willingness to put that knowledge to work.

"You don't want to be overly eager," he says, "but you don't want to stand back and just watch from the outside either."