

■ **Keahey**

From page 1-A

small corner of Alabama soon prompted Keahey to get involved.

"The whole time I was gone, I really missed home and looked forward to coming back," Keahey told the *Sun*. "But I don't think most (people) who leave have that same feeling about coming back. When I got back, I wanted to get as involved as I could. That, along with some encouragement from a few others, prompted my decision to run for State Representative."

Already aware of some of the major issues affecting the area, early in his campaign Keahey says he began to see an even larger picture of the problems that needed to be addressed.

"The entire campaign served as an information gathering process for me,"

he says. "There were many issues of concern that were mentioned to me. I guess the one thing that stands out is the shape of some of our county roads. I traveled down a lot of roads for the first time during my campaign, realizing the problem in some areas for the first time."

Having been in office since mid-November, Keahey says he has already begun an effort to tackle the problem.

"I have already discovered that getting funding to improve some of these roads is going to be an uphill battle," he admits. "I have begun trying to form a relationship with other Representatives of rural districts such as this one in an effort to work with them to create a plan to provide funding to improve all county roads throughout the state."

Keahey acknowledges

that the area he now serves has its share of other problems. Among them is the lack of available jobs and industry. But, he adds, attracting new jobs and industry to the area means first ensuring that the infrastructure is there to support them.

For that reason, Keahey says that one of his top priorities as he takes office will be to ensure that that infrastructure is there.

"Helping to attract new industry is something that will really benefit this area in more ways than one," he says. "But, there is more to attracting industry than just going to the C.E.O.'s of a corporation and begging them to locate here. We have to lay the groundwork to get ready. What I mean by that is that many of our area's needs are all intertwined. We need to work on getting funding for our

infrastructure in order to improve our road system. We also need to ensure that our area's education system is properly funded to ensure that our children receive the quality education they deserve. If we improve our roads and bridges as well as our already good education system, along with a few other areas, this district will market itself, to attract new industry and many other things that will benefit us all."

In addition to working toward such infrastructure, Keahey cites providing for public safety as another issue of concern, and that provision, he adds, takes an increased effort to fund those entities and individuals who provide that safety.

"The safety of our children and the overall protection of all people need to be addressed at all times," Keahey explains. "This is something that must stay in the front of everyone's minds. We have dedicated people looking out for us. I want to make sure that those people have the funding they need to make this area as safe as it possibly can be."

As the youngest member of the Alabama House of Representatives, Keahey says that he sees his youth as an asset to his new leadership role.

"I have always felt that my age is an asset to me," Keahey explains. "I feel that I am energetic, eager and very interested in the legislative process. Being the youngest legislator has its pluses. I have noticed that some in Montgomery are interested in hearing what I have to say because I am young. I do think I will be able to bring some new fresh ideas to the table."

However, Keahey admits that his young age

also means that he has to work hard to learn the ropes. Doing so means listening to the wisdom of those who have more experience, and making sure his own views are heard despite his youth.

"I know that I have a lot to learn," he admits. "I am asking a lot of questions right now trying to learn the process as quickly as I can. Just like with anything else, there are going to be some that aren't going to want to listen to what I have to say and those will require more effort; I am willing to give that effort to make sure that the people here are represented effectively."

"There are many people who know more about the process right now than I do, and I respect that," he adds. "Those are the people that I will learn from. I plan to take that same approach with people here at home. I want to learn from the people here as well and look forward to the opportunities to do so."

With a young family at home, Keahey admits that his new position will take him away from them for periods of time. It is an issue that, he says, he was aware of from the beginning of his campaign, but one that he and his wife decided to tackle together.

"My wife, Lara, and I have been through a lot this past year, but look forward to what's ahead," he says. "My position will require me to be away from home some but we are just going to try to make the adjustments we need to make in order to make the best of it. It will be difficult being away from my wife and son while the legislature is in session. However, the position calls for me to be here at home in this dis-

trict more than in Montgomery and I am thankful for that. It is about a two-hour drive from Grove Hill to Montgomery. I am more fortunate than some Representatives who are forced to travel much further."

With an increasingly partisan division in Montgomery and Washington, Keahey says that he understands the need to reach across party lines to get good legislation passed that will benefit his constituents.

"I have already begun communicating with some of the Republican legislators in Mobile and Baldwin County to create a good working relationship with them," he explains. "I plan on doing the same with the rest. I want to make sure that all legislators know from the beginning that I want to work with them, no matter what party they are in."

Whether it is working with fellow legislators of both parties, helping to garner funding for infrastructure projects for the area, or working to bring industry to his district, Keahey says that he intends to keep in close contact with the people of Choctaw County, and to listen to their concerns.


"I want to be an active participant in what goes on in Choctaw County," he says. "I ran for this position because I wanted to get involved."

This position requires me to stay in contact with the people in order to know their needs and concerns and that is what I plan to do."

"I would like to thank everyone once again for giving me the opportunity to be their Representative," he adds. "It is an honor and I look forward to having an effective 2007."

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