

Burger • Kelly • Otis • Pappas • Price

House bids farewell to five members

As the 1990 session draws to a close, the Minnesota House of Representatives will be saying goodbye to five of its members who are pursuing political careers in different arenas. Each lawmaker leaves with fond memories of the House, but also a feeling that the time is ripe for change. Whether it's serving in the state Senate, as state DFL Party chair, or as governor, each hopes to continue a career in politics.

The political careers of three other House members who are considering different political offices, and one who is not, will be detailed in the next issue.



John Burger



Rep. John Burger, an Independent Republican from Long Lake, wants to be the next governor of Minnesota. He also wants to be the president of the United States someday, but acknowledges that "time is running out."

He's going to be 74 years old next month, and says he "needs to make a move if he's going to make a move at all."

"All my life I've wanted to run for president . . . I still would like to take a crack at that, but I'd like to get a little experience in a governorship before I try, however," says Burger.

Burger is finishing up his fourth term in the House. Now, he says it's the time to move on and allow someone else a chance at his House seat.

"I feel eight years is an adequate time for people to make whatever impact they can in the House," he says. "But I'm not yet satisfied with what I've been able to do . . . I have a number of ideas I want to continue to press and I thought finding another platform to speak from [as governor] would be the way to go."

Burger has served on a host of House committees including the Insurance, Labor-Management, Governmental Operations, Commerce, and Environment and Natural Resources committees.

Property tax reform legislation and a bill that would have provided an incentive program for state employees were

two things that Burger worked on while serving in the House. Neither piece of legislation was approved.

However, Burger says his major disappointment as a lawmaker stems from the way the House operates — not with particular legislation. Burger says there is "far too much controversy, ego satisfying, and personal bitterness about the way we do things here."

Both the DFL and IR parties are at fault for essentially nullifying the minority party.

But despite that criticism, Burger says he will miss his colleagues and the strong "people-centered" feeling in the House.

"It is very stimulating to be in a group of people who are trying to do what they think needs to be done to improve the living and business climate of the state," says Burger.

However, "the House doesn't always do a good job of implementing their intentions — largely because of a lack of good human relation principles and organizational and management practices," he adds.

Burger is a self-employed management consultant, educator, and promoter.

Randy Kelly

Rep. Randy Kelly, a DFLer from East St. Paul, is chair of the powerful Judiciary Committee in the House. So why would he want to give up that position and move to the Senate where he would start all over again as a freshman?

Kelly, who is running for the Senate seat being vacated by the retiring Sen. Marilyn Lantry (DFL-St. Paul), says he agonized over the prospect of leaving the House and his Judiciary chairship, but decided that after 16 years as a representative, the time felt right to make the change.

He says the move will allow him the opportunity to represent an even broader constituency of east side residents. And, Kelly adds, it will cut his campaigning time in half.

"I like campaigning, but it's becoming excruciatingly time consuming and very, very costly, so the thought of a four-year term is certainly attractive to me," says Kelly.

Kelly has been the chair of the Judiciary Committee for four years. He says he's particularly proud of legislation he authored that gave additional rights to crime victims — rights that were sorely lacking 10 years ago.

Another accomplishment he points to is the location of Metropolitan State

University's student and administrative service center on St. Paul's east side, which, he says, will continue to provide an emotional boost to young people living in the area.

Kelly, who has served on a variety of committees during his 16 years in the House, says he has been captivated by the notion of public service since high school.

"I came of age during the 60s when leaders like John and Bobby Kennedy, Martin Luther King, and Hubert Humphrey were telling the younger generation that it was a noble enterprise to go in and help people govern themselves," says Kelly.

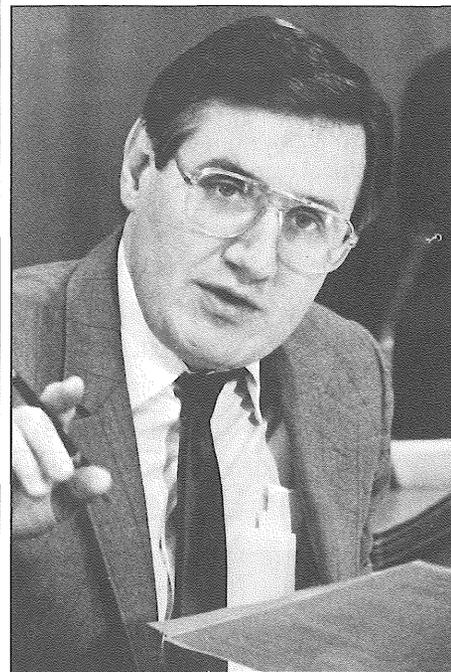
But ironically, it's that loss of interest in government that Kelly says is one of his greatest disappointments.

"We've not been able to interest a large number of young people in the state or country in voting or participating in the political process," says Kelly. "I've always felt young people had a lot to offer in terms of fresh ideas, idealism, and enthusiasm."

In terms of legislation, Kelly says one disappointment is the failure in committee of a bill he authored last year that would have required motorcyclists to wear helmets.

Kelly says his last four years in the House have been his best, adding that working with Judiciary Committee members has been a "stimulating, thought-provoking, and real growth experience."

"Most anything that's controversial eventually ends up there," he points out.



Sandy Pappas



"I don't think you should be in politics if you're not willing to take risks," says St. Paul DFLer Sandy Pappas. With that in mind, Pappas set her sights on a Senate seat that's been occupied by Sen. Don Moe (DFL-St. Paul) for 20 years.

Pappas says there's a leadership vacuum in her district and she's "the kind of person who likes to fill in those gaps."

Politics aside, Pappas is proud of her accomplishments as a community activist, particularly her work to help put the neighborhood urban revitalization plan into law. Under the program, \$18 million was allocated to the inner city for child care, drug prevention, housing, and other programs.

"I feel I've made a difference for my constituency," says Pappas, who has served six years in the House.

One frustration for Pappas has been a bill she authored that would disperse group homes in the inner cities. It has yet to pass. The bill would help eliminate the overconcentration of housing for the mentally ill, chemically dependent, and handicapped.

Certain neighborhoods have become "ghettos for the disabled," which, she says, is not in keeping with the idea of mainstreaming into general society.

"Sometimes it takes many years of education to develop a consensus [among your colleagues] — and sometimes it's hard to be patient while that consensus is developing," says Pappas.

The part Pappas likes best about serving in the House is the friends she has made, along with "being able to work with such a diverse group of people."

Todd Otis

What made Rep. Todd Otis decide to leave his House seat after 12 years and run for the state DFL Party chair?

"My internal clock," says Otis, a Minneapolis DFLer who is running for chair of the state DFL Party.

"I think everybody reaches that decision [to run for office] in a different way with their own internal clock. My internal clock says this is the time," he says.

He adds that after serving 12 years in the House, "it's time to put some new blood in the system."

And if elected party chair, that would be one of his primary duties — finding fresh candidates to run for office.

His enthusiasm for the Legislature is obvious.

"I'm leaving the Legislature loving it," he says.

Otis divides his 12 years in the House into two parts. His service from 1979 to 1984 was spent mostly examining utility reform and energy issues.

The second half was mainly spent dealing with the various legislation that came through the Economic Development Committee, which he chaired for four years.

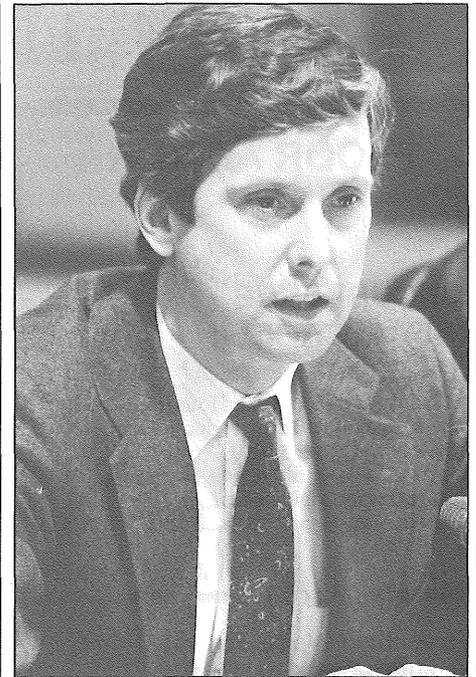
The committee passed good and creative legislation aimed at providing access to information, and money for small- and medium- sized business, says Otis, who dropped out of the U.S. Senate race earlier this year because of what he called the DFL's defeatist attitude about the possibility of beating U.S. Sen. Rudy Boschwitz.

One bill he authored provided for small communities to obtain development loans. The legislation was the first of its kind in the country, he says.

"The kinds of things we have done . . . have not been big, glamorous issues that get on the front page, but instead have been a lot of smaller things that I really think are going to help small business in Minnesota," says Otis.

Otis says he will miss the camaraderie of the House and "the ability to walk in the House chamber, and deal with laws that directly affect the lives of Minnesotans When you're a legislator, you can do things very directly. Even if your bill doesn't pass, it's a nice feeling of power."

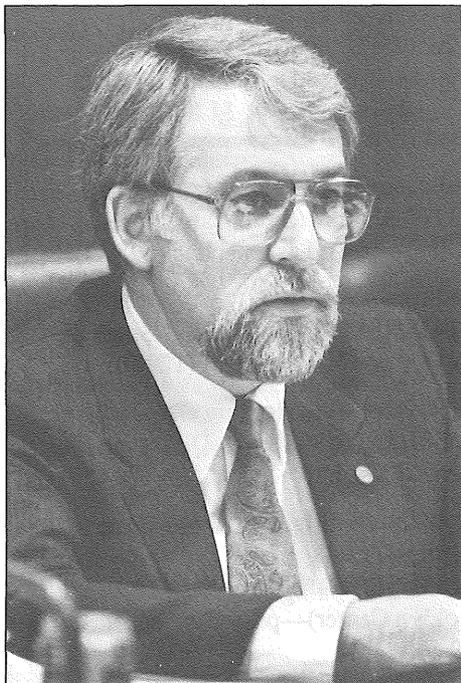
On the downside, Otis says he was disappointed with the "very negative conservatism of the Reagan age."



If elected state DFL Party chair, Otis says he would like to help establish a progressive agenda and work to get the proposals approved by the Legislature.

"Now is a great time to be a Democrat and I want to help other people see that," he adds.

Len Price



Like the other Senate hopefuls, Rep. Len Price likes the idea of being able to expand his current constituency. The DFLer from Woodbury has seen his district grow from 9,800 households in 1982 to 15,500 households in 1988.

"That's made campaigning [every two years] very wearing," he says.

With the retirement of Sen. Bill Diessner (DFL-Afton), Price says he received a lot of encouragement from his family, friends, and constituents to make a bid for the Senate.

"I never had aspirations of serving in the Senate, but it's just one of those situations where there's an opening."

When Price leaves the House, he'll also be leaving behind eight years of seniority and a chance at a possible committee chairship.

Price says he will miss his colleagues, and the House staff. The people who served on the Education Division of Appropriations — of which he once served as vice chair — were particularly

stimulating to work with, he adds.

Price now is vice chair of the General Legislation, Veteran's Affairs & Gaming Committee.

Two proposals he's especially proud of are his bill for the college self-loan program. Under the bill approved in 1983, students who have exhausted all other financial possibilities can receive loans to help them finish college. He also took pride in being an author of the groundwater protection bill approved by the Legislature last year.

Price says serving in the House has "enriched him as a person," adding that he carries a lot of his legislative experience and public policy knowledge to the classroom. He has been a social studies teacher at Woodbury High School for the past 25 years.

Price says one potential major disappointment would be if his teenage student work curfew bill did not pass this session. The legislation has been approved by the House, but is still pending in the Senate.