

Leppik pays 'close attention to constituents'

Rep. Peggy Leppik (IR-Golden Valley) says she's been on enough boards, councils, and task forces the past 14 years to know she'd "rather be making the decisions and making the votes" than have someone do it for her.

So last May when retiring Rep. Jim Heap asked her to consider taking over his job, she jumped at the chance. With only one child left at home, Leppik says she was ready for a change.

"I decided that if I was really committed to some of the ideas and ideals that I had, this is probably the most effective way to pursue them," she says.

With the new demands on her time, Leppik says she has had to cut back the time she has spent on some of the organizations to which she belongs, and had to resign from the State Board of the League of Women Voters, of which she was a past president.

"A lot of things have had to move into a slower mode in my life," she says.

And that includes time spent with her family. But there has been some good in that, too, she says.

Leppik says her campaign has helped her children become more interested in news and important issues, and that not being around the house as much has helped her youngest daughter become more independent.

Although the pace of her life has become more hectic, Leppik remains on the Board of Directors of the Minnesota



Peggy Leppik

District 45B

Age: 47

Home: Golden Valley

Occupation: Homemaker/Volunteer

District traits: 45B is known as a "swing district" with almost equal numbers of DFLers and IRs. In 1988, the Bush-Quayle ticket narrowly edged Dukakis-Bentsen by a 51.2-to-48.8 percent margin.

Opera. Leppik, a former president of the Minnesota Opera Association, says "opera is one of my dear loves."

Likewise, Leppik, a strong advocate for women's colleges, says she is still active in the alumnae association of her alma mater, Smith College in Northampton, Mass.

Married for 23 years with three children, there isn't much of North America that Leppik hasn't seen. She was born in New Jersey, grew up in California and has lived in Montreal, Canada; Connecticut; Pennsylvania; and Wisconsin before moving to Golden Valley in 1976.

Her husband, Ilo, is a physician specializing in epilepsy treatment and research.

Her district includes all of Golden Valley, plus portions of eastern Plymouth, and Medicine Lake. It's a "swing

area" that has been represented by both DFL and IR lawmakers. The western portion of the district in Plymouth is growing rapidly, she says.

She says her top legislative concerns are education and social issues, which mesh well with her committee assignments: Economic Development, Education, Education Finance Division, and Health and Human Services.

Leppik, who is also a member of the Optimists Club, a service organization that raises money for local youth programs, says she has two main goals.

"To become as knowledgeable as I can, and to pay close attention to my constituents. I like doing that because I like working with people and helping people. Sometimes it's very difficult, sometimes you really can't do much to help, but at least I'm going to try."



How do legislators vote on various issues?

Although people frequently call and ask for a legislator's "voting record," no such document exists. In reality, each legislator casts hundreds of votes on assorted bills that are subsequently recorded in the *Journal of the House*.

If you want to know how a legislator voted on a specific bill, the Chief Clerk's

Office and the Senate Information Office can help you.

Probably the best way to get a feel for a legislator's "voting record" is to contact any number of special interest groups that rate legislators based on issues that are important to them. Several business associations and environmental groups, for example, issue regular ratings.

Why does Minnesota need such a large legislature in comparison to other states which have a larger population and land area?

While it's true that Minnesota does have the largest state Senate in the

country with 67 members, the House is far from the top with 134 members.

Tiny New Hampshire has 400 House members, Massachusetts has 160, both Maine and Connecticut have 151 House members, and Vermont has 150 — the same number as Texas, according to *The Book of States*.

The size of the House in Minnesota ranks 12th in the country, and Minnesota, coincidentally, is also the 12th largest state in area. But in terms of population, Minnesota is the 21st largest.

States are free to set up any size legislature their inhabitants want. Alaska, geographically the largest state in the country, has only 20 senators and 40 House members.