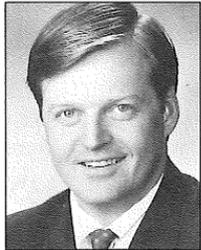


Olson to build on a solid foundation in the House

For Rep. Mark Olson (IR-Big Lake), work in the House of Representatives is a lot like building on any house: You've got to finish the foundation first.



Rep. Mark Olson

Olson knows something about both endeavors. Prior to winning election last fall, the first-term House member had constructed log homes for more than a decade. In the course of learning his trade, he temporarily lived

in several states. While away from Minnesota, he had time to read and listen and learn how other elected officials solved problems among their constituents.

Some issues and situations, he said, were unique to their region. Others, such as a growing demand for services in a time of limited resources, are universal. And yet, amid the clamor of "re-inventing government," he said now is the time to remember that a solid foundation is needed before proceeding with the rest of the project.

That foundation lies with individual responsibility, Olson said.

"A lot of people see it as an attack when you

say that not everything is an inborn right," he said. "I'm not against rights, but with them have to come responsibilities because without them no self-governing society can operate or sustain itself.

"It's as if when the Bill of Rights was adopted 200 years ago, there should have been a 'Bill of Responsibilities' put up along side it."

And although Olson believes people should accept more responsibility for their actions, he also said people should be willing to listen and to not be too judgmental.

"What really qualifies us for this job is our concern," he said, expressing an empathy for the experiences that others bring to policy discussions and a willingness to continually reevaluate his own positions and opinions.

"Because I say something is true and right, that's what I believe, of course. Another person is going to come into a discussion thinking what they believe is equally true and right, too," he said. "Now, we can keep arguing back and forth or we can choose to step back from our own opinions and attempt to actively understand the other side. That's what I want to do."

Olson credits his family for encouraging him to be objective in his decision-making, as well as fostering in him a work ethic and enthusiasm

he displays in his new job.

"The process itself is an education," he said, acknowledging an occasional wish to slow the job of passing legislation — approving fewer laws and allowing more time for deliberating each proposal — to avoid the task of passing corrective measures year after year.

Yet, for all the enjoyment he derives from work as an elected official, Olson said he knows there will come a time when he will not have that privilege.

"That's okay, whatever time I have here is a gift — whether I'm here for only two years or 10 years. There are things I can do from either inside this place or outside of it."

—Dave Price

District 19A

Population: 32,127

Distribution: 75.1 percent rural, 24.9 percent urban

County: Sherburne, Wright

Largest city: Monticello

Location: central

1992 presidential election results:

Bush/Quayle: 33.1 percent

Clinton/Gore: 36.4 percent

Perot/Stockdale: 29.9 percent

Other: 0.6 percent