

new members '81

The Legislator

How 1st termers see the job

"I see myself as an advocate of the people," says Karen Clark (DFL-Mpls).

"I view my role as both a reflector and interpreter of public interest.

"Secondly, it's to provide some type of leadership to constituents with regard to issues and problems, and, hopefully, solutions."

As an individual contribution Clark says, "One of my strengths is in coalition-building. I think I will be effective in working with a lot of different kinds of people—bringing together some of the interests of both rural and city legislators."

Clark grew up on a farm and feels she knows the concerns of rural people.

"I think I'll be able to be an effective inner city legislator by also having common grounds with rural legislators."

Clark's mother is mayor of a small town. "She taught me the connection between economic and social justice. She was my most immediate source of inspiration in my political and community work."

Clark ran for the Legislature at the request of people in her neighborhood, and about her political ambitions says, "I'm real interested in state government. Minnesota has always been a leader nationally through its state legislation. That's what's exciting to me, and that's where I plan to work."

Clark is unmarried, 35 years old, a registered graduate nurse practitioner from the College of St. Teresa, Winona. Born in Oklahoma. She represents District 59A.

Carolyn Rodriguez (DFL-Apple Valley) is a housewife, former teacher, and parent of a third-grader, so it follows that she is "very, very concerned over the way education is going."

Transportation for her area is another interest, and another is health care ... "making as many

different types of medical care available to people within a reasonable distance from their homes ..."

Campaigning for her was ... "on the whole, a tremendously rewarding experience and a tremendous learning experience.

"The campaign trail is long and grueling, and it's hard work. But, on the overall, I think there are far more pluses than negatives."

As to her individual contribution to the Legislature, Rodriguez says, "I've always tried to point out that I am one vote out of 134, and I will do my best to solve the problems and help back legislation that is responsive to our needs.

"I hope very much to be an eloquent spokesperson for all my constituents' concerns. And I hope everyone will feel free to fill me in whenever they have something to bring to my attention."

Rodriguez has a degree from the University of Texas and studied at the University of Madrid. She's married to Jesus Rodriguez. They have one child.

What started as a 15-year hobby has become a job for Lawrence Pogemiller (DFL-Mpls). He sees it as "simply a public service."

"I've been active in politics for the last 15 years as a hobby. When the opportunity came up to run for office, it fit nicely into my schedule, so I thought I'd do it while I'm still single. It's a tremendous burden on one's family."

Pogemiller feels committee work is where the job's at, but he says he doesn't expect to have a "whole lot of choice as to what committees I'll be on, but I'm interested in the areas of revenue, taxation, criminal justice, and local government.

"By and large, whatever committees I get assigned to, I'll try to reach back a little and learn the subject thoroughly—and deal with it—become somewhat of an expert on it.

"The nitty-gritty in committee work, the amending within committees, has a lot more to do with public policy than the broad strokes.

"The broad strokes will be made by governors, speakers of the House, and majority leaders.

"The role of the individual legislator is to try to somehow fit into that and work on the nitty-gritty details of the broad strokes."

Pogemiller's a fan of the citizen legislature.

"I believe in the citizen legislature, and I'm going to treat it as such.

"Legislatures should certainly not become a lifetime career for anyone.

"But, as a major goal for the time I'm here, I hope to raise the people's opinion of public servants. It's not good right now."

Pogemiller, a systems analyst, is a Transportation/Engineering graduate of the U of M and is getting his graduate degree in Economics. He's 29 and unmarried. Represents District 55A.

"I don't want to ever be considered a 'black' legislator. But the viewpoint of a person of color is necessary," said Randy Staten (DFL-Mpls).

"Certainly, color comes into play as far as housing, welfare and employment are concerned. I've always believed that politics is one area where involvement can lead to necessary changes.

"Part of that is the job of a representative who I think is supposed to represent the interests and the welfare of his constituency.

"To do that, you have to stay in tune with them ... give them

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Randy Staten

information ... show some leadership in defining the type of issues and directions we ought to be going in ... try to educate them as to what the issues are, what the differences are and why I have established a certain position.

"I'd like to be in a position to be able to go along with the wishes of the majority of my constituents, but majorities simply don't always make it right.

"Could I share an unusual campaign experience? There's only one I remember.

"I was passing out literature in the senior citizens' building, and a guy came out with a shotgun. He was mad at Congressman Martin Sabo and evidently thought I was Martin.

"I didn't clearly understand what the issue was, and at the time, with that shotgun there, I wasn't necessarily thinking about the issue.

"I was thinking how I could get through to him that I wasn't Martin Sabo ... and I did some long talking."

Staten is married, has two children, is 37 years old, a graduate of the U of M in Speech and Advanced Communications; has done graduate work at New York University in Business Management. His birthplace is Charlotte, North Carolina, Represents District 56A.

