

# A mind for policy

Long a leader on tax issues, Rest combined background as an accountant and teacher to push for reforms as House member

By DAVID MAEDA

**R**ep. Ann H. Rest (DFL-New Hope) came to the Legislature in 1984 with a slightly different background from many of her colleagues who are attorneys, farmers, or business owners.

With degrees in Latin, Greek, English, teaching, and accounting from a variety of institutions including Northwestern University, the University of Chicago, Harvard University, and the University of Minnesota, Rest spent nine years as a teacher in the Robbinsdale area school system.

Rest was primarily an English and literature teacher with the district.

She said declining enrollment in the school district led her to make a career switch to another service occupation, working as a certified public accountant.

And because of her growing interest and involvement in her political party's activities, along with her background in education and taxes, she then decided to run for a seat in the Legislature.

Now with her 16 years of experience as a member of the House, Rest, 58, said she has decided to change direction again.

Last winter she announced her decision to run for her district's state Senate seat currently held by Sen. Ember Reichgott Junge (DFL-New Hope). Junge, an assistant majority leader in the Senate, has decided not to run for another term.

"I see it as an opportunity to serve a wider constituency," Rest said.

Her current district covers all of New Hope,

northwest Crystal, and part of Golden Valley. The Senate district includes all of Crystal, New Hope, Robbinsdale, and a portion of Brooklyn Center.

Rest said she'll miss the day-to-day relationships with many of her House colleagues but she hopes to continue working on many of the same issues she has been involved with over the years.

She said she is most proud of working on the following achievements as a member of

the House: reforms to the state's DWI enforcement laws, tightening the restrictions on youth access to tobacco products, and several tax related initiatives including the state's working family credit and reforms to tax-increment finance laws.

Among her ongoing priorities, Rest said, is finding adequate and stable funding for public education — which means finding a method to take education funding off of the property tax. The education homestead credit, which she

helped establish, is one step in that direction, Rest said.

In a way, Rest has come full circle as a House member.

"I came here in my first term as a member of the minority, and I'm going to leave as a member of the minority," she said.

In between that time, as a member of the majority, Rest served as chair of the House Taxes Committee and, later, the House Local Government and Metropolitan Affairs Committee. She said being a member of the minority party doesn't necessarily mean not having an impact on the process.

"When one is willing to work on a bipartisan basis, a member can be effective in influencing public policy whether in the majority or the minority," she said. "I haven't stopped offering legislation since I've been in the minority."

Among her colleagues who hold Rest in high esteem is the current chair of the Taxes Committee, Rep. Ron Abrams (R-Minnetonka). Abrams ended the final Taxes Committee hearing this year by recognizing Rest's contributions and accomplishments.

"You made the committee absolutely the best committee to serve on," Abrams told Rest.

Abrams said that both as the ranking member from the minority party on the committee and as tax chair, Rest was respectful of all members.

"She treated all members with equality regardless of their party designation," Abrams said. "She made her decisions as the tax chair based on what was good tax policy. She was willing to listen to and understand your point of view."

Abrams said he has the highest respect for Rest and will miss serving with her.

"She brings a centrist perspective that is so rare in these days of extreme partisan bickering," he said.



## STEPPING DOWN

**Rep. Ann H. Rest**  
**DFL**

**District 46A – New Hope**

**Terms: 8**

**Career notes:** A former chair of the House Taxes Committee, Rest is widely respected as an expert in tax policy, and she sponsored several key tax reform measures during her time in the House.