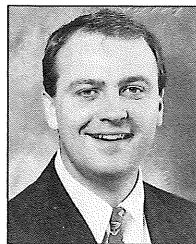


Teacher Holsten: an active student of government

Just two months ago, Rep. Mark Holsten (IR-Stillwater) was teaching in the Stillwater School District. Today, he is the Legislature's second



Rep. Mark Holsten

youngest representative, and his desk is covered with letters from some very young constituents — his students.

"These kids are talking about the same issues as adults," said Holsten. "In some cases, they are talking about them more in-depth than the adults. They each require a personal answer," said Holsten. "It means a lot to these kids, and they want to hear back."

At 27, becoming a representative is Holsten's second job since graduating from the University of Minnesota-Duluth and the University of St. Thomas.

Holsten is certified to teach social studies, but three years of substitute teaching have brought him into a variety of classroom situations. "You name it, I've taught it — even personal band lessons," said Holsten, who admits he doesn't play an instrument.

Some of his classroom lessons about grassroots involvement he is now learning first-hand. Other

lessons he didn't anticipate. There is the trip that he and 70 other legislators took to Duluth last month, courtesy of the Duluth Area Chamber of Commerce. The furor took him by surprise.

"The *real* problem is special interest groups pumping thousands of dollars to certain individuals," said Holsten. "There is a difference between giving money to get [a candidate] elected. There's a string attached there. At some time the string is going to be pulled. I see a difference between that and business saying 'this is what your state dollars have done, this is what we're doing and here is what we need.'"

Then there is the lesson of partisanship. Partisan politics, he thought, would subside once his campaign was over.

"I understand the campaign part of politics," said Holsten. "Once we got here I thought we would be more interested in taking care of the state than we are."

His interest in public policy was developed by his parents, Holsten said, who "always discussed issues and news" and took vacations centered around historical sites. His father, Roy Holsten, served in the Senate from 1967 to 1971.

Holsten's newly created District 56A is an Independent-Republican-leaning district, and

Holsten's campaign called for a state spending freeze and no tax increases.

"The thing I heard was get a handle on state spending," said Holsten. Minnesota has been taking the wrong path and now ranks second in the nation in commercial and industrial property taxes, he said.

"We've had growth in the public sector, while we're losing business. We have to foster private business growth to employ our people. I see the role of government as helping the private sector grow — to employ our people and make their lives better."

—Joyce Peterson

District 56A

Population: 32,113
Distribution: 75.4 percent of residents live in urban areas, 24.6 percent rural.
County: Washington
Largest city: Stillwater
Location: east Metro, bordering Wisconsin
1992 presidential election results:
Clinton/Gore: 39.6 percent
Bush/Quayle: 33.5 percent
Perot/Stockdale: 26.1 percent
Other: 0.8 percent