

'For it's one, two, three times, she's in . . .'

The first time Rep. Becky J. Lourey (DFL-Kerrick) ran for the Legislature, she was defeated. The experience taught her a lesson: She had ideas, but needed a greater understanding of her district.

So Lourey decided to get an education by becoming active in various groups such as the East Central Recycling Task Force, the Pine County Developmental Achievement Center, and the AIDS Task Force.

She tried again in 1988 to unseat long-time Independent-Republican Rep. Doug Carlson, but failed a second time. Lourey was undaunted. "The experience made me want to involve myself more," she says.

This time Lourey sought and obtained an appointment to the Health Care Access Commission, where she continued to learn about health issues and became more familiar with the state government process.

The effort paid off. In November, Lourey narrowly defeated Carlson in one of the closest legislative elections of 1990.

Lourey says she decided to run for the Legislature because of what she saw as government's hands-off attitude during the 1980s, symbolized by the savings and loan crisis and the rise of homelessness.

"I really believe in government," she says. "I believe in responsible government and responsive government."

Her election comes at a good time for the mother of 11 children, seven of whom are adopted. "The kids are enjoying their dad," Lourey says. Her husband, Gene, works from their farm home as a systems analyst.

Lourey's top priority for this session is to "make sure that every Minnesotan has financial and geographic access to health care." It's a goal she's sure can be reached.

Other concerns for Lourey are the environment and economic development. She says she's been impressed by the entrepreneurial talents of her district and would like to improve economic development and tourism programs. Lourey wants to push for a telecommunications program that would allow areas of her vast district to be linked by telephones and computers.

She says she wants to learn as much as



Becky J. Lourey

District 14B

Age: 47

Home: Kerrick

Occupation: Activist and homemaker

District traits: 14B is "really large" and primarily rural, containing parts of Aitkin, Carlton, Kanabec, and Pine counties.

she can about a topic before making a decision and has added a television and radio to her office in the State Office Building to keep abreast of the news. She also plans frequent weekend trips to her district to discuss issues with constituents.

As a freshman legislator, Lourey says she realizes the importance of her new job.

"It's really very different from being here asking for something [as when she was public affairs chair for the Minnesota Public Health Association] and actually working here," she says. "It's a lot of responsibility."

It's a fact!

It's almost creepy. All those gophers. Watching.

The State Office Building has gobs of gophers. The next time you use the stairway in the State Office Building, take a look at the railing.

It contains 168 gophers.

Over in the Capitol, the state rodent can be seen in a stairway and in the railing of the rotunda. Architect Cass Gilbert designed the gopher in the iron grillwork "that guards the main floor stair well to the basement," wrote Neil B. Thompson in *Minnesota's State Capitol*.

You can also see gophers in the wrought iron gates that guard the entrances to the Senate and the Minnesota Supreme Court.



Gophers keep a watchful eye on those who use the stairway in the State Office Building.