

Life at Capitol far cry from Molnau's days on farm

Like her parents before her, Rep. Carol Molnau (R-Chaska) runs a family farm. On a 430-acre plot in northern Chaska, she and her husband grow corn, soybeans, alfalfa, and tend 140 head of dairy and beef cattle.



Rep. Carol Molnau

While on the farm, Molnau said she never dreamed of becoming a member of the Minnesota Legislature. "But I've always been involved in my community and my business and I think that probably evolved into my involvement here," she said.

Nevertheless, Molnau is no political neophyte. She has been involved in R party politics for several years and has spent the last four years on the Chaska City Council. She said that lifelong volunteer duties, including community education projects and the 4-H Club, have kept her in touch with local issues.

In ousting the DFL incumbent in District 35A (Larry Bodahl), Molnau credits her community involvement, conservative philosophy, and accessibility to the voters for her 1992 campaign victory.

But she said it was the hard work of her family that made it all possible. "Family was the most

important element in running for this office," she said. Molnau said her husband and three daughters were more than willing to pitch in and help so she could devote more time to campaigning and being a House member.

"When one of us has been involved in something, the rest of us kind of pick up the slack," she said.

Molnau's district is economically diverse, with urban industrial sections to the east and rural sections in the northern and southern ends of the district.

While this creates divergent concerns that may prove difficult to bridge, Molnau said she heard a common theme while on the campaign trail: "Basically, people weren't happy with government."

Many voters felt overtaxed while still expressing the desire for higher quality government services.

"One of the things I heard over and over again is [that] they couldn't afford any more taxes, but were concerned for schools. The priority still is for K-12 education," Molnau said, adding that improving the state's infrastructure was also a concern.

Prompted by her district's frustrations, Molnau is most interested in streamlining government to reduce public spending without com-

promising services.

"I would like to see some down-sizing of government in the form of efficiency," she said. Molnau would prefer state employees to target waste. "Letting them do it gives them some control" along with a feeling of accomplishment, she said.

Life at the Capitol is a far cry from her days on the farm, and Molnau is preparing herself for the tough calls that loom ahead. She said she wants to be the kind of legislator "where you listen to your constituency, and you can still make decisions here [in St. Paul] that you can go home and feel right about."

—Adam Samaha

District 35A

Population: 32,924
Distribution: 54.2 percent of residents live in urban areas, 45.8 percent rural.
Counties: Carver, Le Sueur, Scott, Sibley
Largest city: Chaska
Location: southwest Metro
1992 presidential election results:
Bush/Quayle: 34.8 percent
Clinton/Gore: 34.2 percent
Perot/Stockdale: 30.6 percent
Other: 0.4 percent