

New members . . .

Dr. Mulder wants to improve quality of rural life

Is there a doctor in the House?

Yes, indeed. He's Rep. Richard Mulder, who has spent the past 25 years as a family physician in Ivanhoe, Minn., a town of 751 people in the southwestern corner of the state.



Rep. Richard Mulder

After treating more than 17,000 patients, Mulder believes he has learned some things that should serve him well at the Capitol.

Mulder has been active in "medical politics" for many years — as a trustee of the Minnesota Medical Association and a past president of the Minnesota Academy of Family Physicians. And he was appointed, in 1992, by Gov. Arne Carlson to the Minnesota Board of Medical Practice.

In that same year, Mulder won Independent-Republican endorsement for a seat in the Minnesota House of Representatives. That campaign did not end in victory, but when he ran again last November, he won the District 21B seat, formerly occupied by DFL Rep. Andy Steensma.

As a member of the minority party, Mulder said he doesn't have "any illusion" that he will be able to change major state policies, but he hopes to communicate his ideas to legislators on both sides of the aisle. His membership on the Health and Human Services Committee and its finance division will give him a voice in the ongoing health care policy debate.

Mulder is convinced that government involvement in health care, including this state's MinnesotaCare program, has "increased the cost of health care."

"Rural health care has been an area where I've developed expertise," Mulder said. He

has made more than 30 lobbying trips to Washington, D.C., to correct what he contends are inequities in Medicare payments to rural doctors and hospitals.

Mulder also is concerned about the "continued gradual deterioration of the quality of life out in rural Minnesota."

He recalled that 25 years ago, he used to deliver 75 to 100 babies a year. The babies were born to married couples who wanted and "could afford the child."

In recent years, he has delivered about 25 babies a year. The mothers are "almost all on welfare, many of them are not married," and some of the babies are not wanted.

The plight of mothers and their babies leads Mulder to conclude that "there's been a radical change in this state the last 25 years and it's not for the better."

Instead of relying on government, Mulder says a way must be found "to reinvent the family . . . to solidify the family unit," and ensure that people "have a proper income so that the state won't have to do everything for them because the state's a poor mother. The state just can't raise children like good parents can."

In Mulder's view, government taxation has become too burdensome on people who have "lost their discretionary income, and they've said: 'No, enough's enough!'"

Bringing government budgets back in line means cutting spending, and Mulder says that is "going to hurt and everybody's going to feel the pain."

But there's pain for legislators, too, as they endure the stress of long legislative sessions. "I've already treated a few," said Mulder.

The House doctor has done some "cursory examinations" of legislators and staff members and, in one case, recommended that a person

see a doctor to get a prescription. (He won't write prescriptions because he "can't keep medical records" at his legislative office.)

"Without practicing medicine, I've tried to give some good advice to several people," he said. "It's worked out . . . medicine, like government, is a lot of common sense stuff."

Mulder and his wife, Ruth, who campaigned with him and works in his office at the Capitol, have four children: Ricky, 28; Angela, 27; Stefani, 24; and Curtis, 21.

As for hobbies, Mulder says, "I love to fly." He towed a banner behind his Cessna 182 while campaigning the 100-mile length of his district. He also finds time to play penny ante poker, scuba dive, and build radios and stereos.

Mulder appreciates the complexity of problems facing Minnesotans and admits that he doesn't have "all the answers."

He pledges to do his best for his constituents. "I hope I have some knowledge and experience that I can bring to the people here, and maybe I can help them make the right decisions."

— Mordecai Specktor

District 21B

Population: 33,068

Distribution: 52.31 percent urban; 47.69 percent rural

Counties: Lincoln, Lyon, Nobles, Pipestone, Rock

Largest city: Pipestone

Location: southwestern Minnesota

Unemployment rate: 3.97 percent

Residents living below poverty level: 13.82 percent

1992 presidential election results:

Bush/Quayle 35.73 percent

Clinton/Gore 36.79 percent

Perot/Stockdale 25.75 percent

Other: 1.73 percent

Rep. Joel Jacobs retires from House

Rep. Joel Jacobs (DFL-Coon Rapids) resigned from the House of Representatives March 5 when he was appointed to the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) by Gov. Arne Carlson.

Jacobs, who was first elected to the House in 1972, was in his 12th term. He chaired the House Regulated Industries and Energy Committee.

The governor has called an April 4 special election to fill the vacated seat in District 49B. If necessary, a special primary election will be held March 21.

In valedictory remarks at the close of the

House floor session March 2, Jacobs said he was moving to the PUC "with mixed emotions. I have always loved this body like my family."

Jacobs praised the "absolutely superb" House staff members, and thanked fellow lawmakers.

"I've really enjoyed working with you. This is a great place, a great body. It's true we have differences of opinion, but nevertheless we are friends and continue to be friends."

The five-member PUC regulates the prices and services of telephone, natural gas, and electric utilities.

House Speaker Irv Anderson (DFL-Int'l Falls) on March 7 appointed Rep. Steve Trimble (DFL-St. Paul) to take Jacobs' position as chair of the House Regulated Industries and Energy Committee.

Trimble is a teacher who was elected to the House in 1986. This will be his first time as a committee chair.

Anderson said that Trimble's "familiarity with energy issues and his ability to promote healthy discussion and consensus-building will make him an excellent chairman."