

Peterson plans to stay true to roots, ideals

There's a glass jar next to Rep. Doug Peterson's desk in the State Office Building.

"That's what I farm," he says. "When I need a reminder of where I come from and who I represent, that's what I look at."

The jar is full of topsoil.

But Peterson is tilling more than his 300 acres in southwestern Minnesota these days. He's now responsible for more than 30,000 people in District 20A, and that's a field he intends to see flourish.

He hopes a strong commitment to the people he represents and his past political experience — his father was a representative for 10 years and Peterson unsuccessfully ran for Congress in the Second District in 1988 — can bring about change.

"We need to ensure the economic viability of small towns, especially farming communities," he says.

Promoting ethanol as a fuel would "help the agriculture sector while also reducing our dependence on foreign oil," he says. Peterson also believes the country should have adopted an energy policy long ago.

"We've had the energy alternatives for a long time. It's just sad we haven't had the



Doug Peterson

District 20A

Age: 42

Home: Madison

Occupation: Teacher/Farmer

District traits: 20A includes all of Lac qui Parle County and parts of Swift, Yellow Medicine, and Chippewa counties in southwestern Minnesota. The district voted for Paul Wellstone over Rudy Boschwitz for U.S. senator in 1990 by a 51.2-to-48.8 percent margin.

courage to act on them."

And although the world of politicking is not new to this DFLer, the view from the other side of the desk has produced several surprises.

"The amount of information that comes across my desk is amazing. And everybody's plan is important, everybody's needs are important. It all affects somebody," he says.

As a lawmaker, he says he wants to do everything he can to ensure his constituents get as much information as possible about state government so they understand where *their* plan fits in the big picture.

"Access to information is what it's all about," he says. "People need to know

why things function the way that they do. They need to understand the process."

That Peterson wants to ensure people understand the process should come as no surprise to people living in his district.

He has been a teacher for 20 years, working at schools in Glencoe, Canby, Madison, Dawson, and Montevideo.

He's currently on leave of absence from his job as an art teacher at Montevideo Senior High School.

Peterson, who is an accomplished painter, intends to preserve his ideals, both in his legislative work and on canvas.

"You can't lose sight of why you came here," he says. "I won't let that happen."

It's a fact!

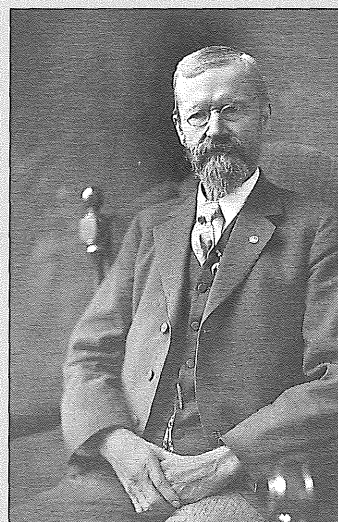
Ever heard of an attorney or state representative giving up their job to manage a custodial staff? There's always a first.

Eben E. Corliss of Fergus Falls was the Otter Tail County Attorney for 10 years; before that, a state representative. In 1895, he was appointed to the Board of State Capitol Commissioners, which oversaw construction of the present-day Capitol.

He remained on the board for the entire 14 years of its existence. But when the board's work in planning and overseeing construction of the Capitol was finished, Corliss' dedication to the structure wasn't.

Corliss was so concerned about the Capitol that, in 1910, he moved to St. Paul to become head custodian of the building so he could personally see that it was cared for properly.

Corliss remained at the job for seven years until his death in 1917.



Eben Corliss, once a lawyer and a lawmaker, became the head custodian of the Capitol from 1910-1917.

(Photo by Lee Bros., courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society)