

otic tune before belting out a round of "Happy Birthday" for Munger. Among the singers was Munger's great-granddaughter, Katie Morrissey.

The Kids From Fridley got a standing ovation from the House, and later, some of the vocalists commented on the experience of performing in the House chamber.

"I thought it was really cool," said Kaitlyn Gaynon, 11.

Not everyone at the Capitol was there to warmly welcome legislators back, however. At least 200 people from around the state rallied in the rotunda to protest changes in welfare programs.

"No justice, No peace," the crowd chanted. Buses came from Winona, Bemidji, Northfield, St. Paul, Minneapolis, St. Cloud, and Mankato to bring people to the rally, which was organized by Minnesota Welfare Rights Coalition. "We don't think they're representing us," said Brenda Boettcher, 35, of Winona. "We want them to know that poor people are people, too."

The state passed sweeping welfare reform legislation in response to a 1996 federal law that scrapped portions of the long-standing welfare system.

All the action at the Capitol had even the most experienced hands a bit excited as they looked ahead to the action this year.

"It's like the first day of school," said Eric Eskola, a veteran radio reporter who has covered the capitol since 1985.

His press corps colleague, Mike Mulcahy, now covering his ninth session for KTCA Channel 2, concurred.

"You do realize the days are going to be longer," he said.

Where to find information

Chief Clerk's Office

211 State Capitol (612) 296-2314

This office provides copies of bills at no charge, all agendas for House sessions, and the Journal of the House.

House Index Department

211 State Capitol (612) 296-6646

The House Index Department, a part of the Chief Clerk's Office, has a computerized index available for public use. House Index lists bills by committee, topic, author, file number, and other categories. The office can also give you the current status of legislation.

If you have Internet access, visit the Legislature's web page at:
<http://www.leg.state.mn.us>



Rooted in program, Rodosovich continues to cultivate youth

By Nicole Wood

Once a year in January, former Rep. Peter Rodosovich comes back to the Capitol with more than 1,200 teenagers in tow.

As state executive director of the YMCA Youth in Government program, it's his job to share with our state's future politicians his firsthand knowledge of the legislative process and the Capitol's history. (See related story, page 18)

Rodosovich was elected to the House at age 22, and he credits the youth program he now runs for inspiring him to seek office at such an early age. He was a Youth in Government participant in the 1970s. He first won election to the House in 1982, and the DFLer served his Faribault-area district until 1994.

In a recent interview, he said his decision to leave the House was based on a need to "regroup" and a desire to spend more time with his family.

"I kind of assumed that I would do 10 years of public service, and I ended up doing 12," he said. "I stayed a little longer than I anticipated."

Rodosovich, 38, still lives in Faribault and commutes to his Minneapolis office. Most of his time is spent overseeing the Youth in Government program. He also coordinates international programs for several Minneapolis YMCA branches and does public policy work with YMCAs across the state. He said he draws on his legislative experience to educate YMCA board members about lobbying and the political process.

Looking back at his time as a lawmaker, Rodosovich said he is satisfied with his accomplishments.

"I had a lot of wonderful opportunities," he said. "I chaired some of the best committees that anybody could chair."

One of those was the House Health and Human Services Committee, a panel that traditionally carries a heavy workload. Last year, the committee led the overhaul of the state's welfare system, and Rodosovich grades well the performance of his former committee.

"Minnesota is doing better than a lot of

other states with the wave of welfare reform sweeping the country because we planned ahead," he said.

Rodosovich pointed to the 1986 creation of the Minnesota Family Investment Program as an example of a welfare-to-work program that was ahead of its time. That program, which operated in eight counties, was the forerunner of the welfare-to-work measures that make up the cornerstone of Minnesota's 1997 welfare reforms.

Rodosovich said one of his fondest memories from his days in the Legislature is his time overseeing the 1989-90 restoration of the House chamber.

An unofficial Capitol historian, Rodosovich researched the Cass Gilbert papers to get a feel for why the architect selected one item versus another or why he chose a particular color combination.

"There's so much history in the building," Rodosovich said. "When you sit in the chamber, you're so busy and you're so caught up in the activities of the day that you really don't absorb the 90-plus years of history and spirits and discussions that



Former Rep. Peter Rodosovich has been out of office for three years, but he returns to the Capitol as part of his job running a program that aims to teach young people about government and the legislative process.

have taken place. Care was taken to make sure that we put it back better than the way we found it."

Although he would not completely rule out the possibility of returning to the House someday, Rodosovich said it would take a specific goal or a strong issue to draw him back.

"I feel like I've done my job," he said. "I did a good job, and now it's truly someone else's responsibility." 