



Q. Who was the oldest member of the Minnesota House of Representatives? The youngest?

A. The oldest Minnesota House member ever to have served is believed to have been 86-year-old Rep. John B. Hompe of Deer Creek in Otter Tail County.

Hompe, a Civil War veteran who enlisted at the age of 16, served in the House during the 1889 session; in the Senate during the 1891 and 1893 sessions; and again in the House during the 1915-1931 sessions.

A farmer, Hompe immigrated from Amsterdam, Holland, to the United States in 1849. He was born Feb. 4, 1846, and died in 1937, according to records from the Legislative Reference Library and the *Minnesota Legislative Manual*.

In 1891, he acted as president of the Senate due to the illness of then-Lt. Gov. G.S. Ives. A book on the 1927 Legislature said of Hompe: "He is still active and vigorous in both mind and body and is inclined to vote on the side of the plain common people."

Although Hompe is believed to be the oldest person to have ever served in the House, Rep. Willard Munger (DFL-Duluth) is closing in on the record. Munger is now 83, but will be 84 later this month.

The-youngest House member ever is still in politics today. Tad Jude, a former Hennepin County commissioner, was elected to the Minnesota House as a DFLer from Mound at age 20 and sworn in at age 21. Today he is an Independent-Republican and recently ran unsuccessfully for the U.S. Congress. He left the Minnesota House in 1982.

Jude just missed being disqualified for the House when he was first elected in 1972. The Minnesota Constitution requires all House members to be 21 years old or older. Although Jude was 20 at the time of the November election, his birthday occurred in December, shortly before the January 1973 swearing in and session start date.



Rep. John B. Hompe

New members . . .

Former IR party chair Sykora takes seat in House chamber

During her education at St. Paul's College of St. Catherine, Rep. Barb Sykora used to take a break some days and travel across town to watch her father at work.



Rep. Barb Sykora

She'd climb the State Capitol steps, head over to the Senate floor, and peer over the railing of the public gallery to watch Sen. John Zwach, then Senate majority leader (and later a U.S.

representative from southwestern Minnesota).

"I was awfully proud," Sykora said. She was studying to be a school teacher then and hadn't thought much about politics.

Today, Zwach's daughter climbs the Capitol steps for a different reason — to represent the people from western Hennepin County in the Minnesota House of Representatives.

Sykora, an Independent-Republican from Excelsior, isn't a new lawmaker in the traditional sense. She served as the state IR Party co-chair from 1987 to 1993. She recruited many of the IR lawmakers now in the Legislature to run for office, and she supported them during campaign trips and media swings around the state.

As the state IR party co-chair, "you're support service," Sykora said. Your top priorities are to train volunteers, recruit candidates, and win elections. As a lawmaker, she believes she will have more of a direct impact in changing state policy and be able to help her constituents more.

"I'm not as partisan as you'd think a former state party chair would be . . . I'd prefer to be a statesman. My motivation is for the next generation," said Sykora, 53, who most recently served as district director for former U.S. Rep. Rod Grams, now a U.S. senator.

"I've been tested under some stressful situations," Sykora said. During her tenure with the state party she had to help clean up a major budget deficit within the party's accounts and help handle Sen. Dave Durenberger's ethical issues.

But, she said, she knows she still has a lot to learn as a first-term lawmaker.

Sykora did try to use her knowledge and experience to gain an assistant minority leader's spot this session. She gave veteran IR lawmakers a run for their money when she lasted until the seventh ballot before drop-

ping out of the race.

She was encouraged to run for office in 1994 after Rep. Jerry Knickerbocker (IR-Minnetonka) announced he was retiring. "I had a strong interest in public policy and felt I could represent my community well," she said.

Sykora had four children to raise and lived in a district with strong incumbents who were difficult to challenge. She did try unsuccessfully to challenge then U.S. Rep. Gerry Sikorski for the sixth district congressional seat in 1986.

Portions of her legislative agenda directly stem from her children and their generation. She sees how difficult it is for young adults today to find good jobs and hopes she can provide help by improving Minnesota's business climate.

Education funding reform also is a part of her agenda. Minnesota's property tax system is based on a false premise that higher property value implies a greater level of income, she said. As a result, many metropolitan homeowners, especially seniors, are taxed out of their homes.

Sykora says money goes further in rural areas. The cost of living in a particular district should be included in the education funding formula.

Like many from her large Independent-Republican first-term class, Sykora said she also hopes to help reform the state's welfare and workers' compensation systems.

"There are lots of problems government can't solve," she said. "As citizens, we need to re-create an atmosphere that turns to the communities and individuals to solve problems rather than the government."

— K. Darcy Hanzlik

District 43B

Population: 32,296
Distribution: 100 percent in urban areas
County: Hennepin
Largest city: Minnetonka
Location: west Metro
Unemployment rate: 3.86 percent
Residents living below poverty level: 2.08 percent
1992 presidential election results:
 Bush/Quayle 39.79 percent
 Clinton/Gore 35.27 percent
 Perot/Stockdale 24.08 percent
 Other: 0.86 percent