

Workman among friends in Chanhassen

Rep. Tom Workman (IR-Chanhassen) has been involved in Republican political campaigns since he was 12, when his father tried to win a



Rep. Tom Workman

seat on the Carver County Board of Commissioners. Workman believes his father's loss, by a mere 100 votes, was the foundation for his drive to win elections and defend his ideals.

"I get excited about elections," said Workman. "It's such an interesting process. To me, there's so much room in politics for people to get involved. It's amazing to me that more people don't."

But the campaign process alone, Workman believes, can determine whether citizens end up in public service.

"If people could be appointed to the Legislature, you wouldn't believe the list of people who [would want to be here]. But the campaign is what separates a lot of people out — they're not willing to put themselves on the line."

Workman attributes his conservative political beliefs and directness to his father, and his mother, "who said it the way it is."

Raised in Chaska, he sharpened his political skills as president of the College Republicans at

St. Cloud State University. He also served on the College Republicans' state board.

Workman interned for and later joined former Rep. Arlan Stangeland's campaign committee. Learning politics across the campaign's sprawling 23-county district, he said, was "baptism by fire."

"When you start out, you're optimistic. It's 80 degrees and you're knocking on doors in short sleeves," Workman said. But the winners are determined "during never-ending days from eight in the morning until ten at night — through the cold, the snow, and the frozen ground. Everything gets tougher as you approach November."

Workman put himself through college by working for Super Valu stores and United Parcel Service (UPS). He eventually became a member of the UPS management team, but left when that lifestyle began to conflict with his desire to spend more time with his wife, Carolyn, and their newborn daughter.

The Chanhassen area is the area that Workman considers home. He served on the Chanhassen City Council from 1989 until 1992, and also served on the Regional Transit Board.

Now an insurance agent, Workman has been a strong proponent of opt-out transit systems, seeing them as more cost-effective and geared to the needs of suburban residents than the Metro-

politan Transit Commission.

He also has co-authored a bill that would prohibit smoking in day care facilities. Workman's mother died from emphysema five years ago. It was an experience, he said, that is likely to make him one of the most outspoken anti-smoking legislators in the state.

Three of the cities in his district — Eden Prairie, Chanhassen, and Victoria — are among Minnesota's 18 fastest growing cities.

"It's a beautiful district," Workman said, referring to the area formed by redistricting. "Everything they want is what I want. I think the Democrats scraped a lot of Republicans into one district just for me."

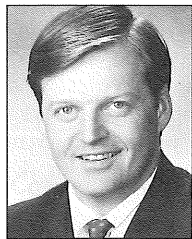
—Joyce Peterson

District 43A

Population: 32,450
Distribution: 100 percent urban
County: Carver, Hennepin
Largest city: Eden Prairie (portion)
Location: southern Metro
1992 presidential election results:
 Bush/Quayle: 41.8 percent
 Clinton/Gore: 30.4 percent
 Perot/Stockdale: 27.3 percent
 Other: 0.5 percent

Olson to build on a solid foundation in the House

For Rep. Mark Olson (IR-Big Lake), work in the House of Representatives is a lot like building on any house: You've got to finish the foundation first.



Rep. Mark Olson

Olson knows something about both endeavors. Prior to winning election last fall, the first-term House member had constructed log homes for more than a decade. In the course of learning his trade, he temporarily lived in several states. While away from Minnesota, he had time to read and listen and learn how other elected officials solved problems among their constituents.

Some issues and situations, he said, were unique to their region. Others, such as a growing demand for services in a time of limited resources, are universal. And yet, amid the clamor of "re-inventing government," he said now is the time to remember that a solid foundation is needed before proceeding with the rest of the project.

That foundation lies with individual responsibility, Olson said.

"A lot of people see it as an attack when you

say that not everything is an inborn right," he said. "I'm not against rights, but with them have to come responsibilities because without them no self-governing society can operate or sustain itself."

"It's as if when the Bill of Rights was adopted 200 years ago, there should have been a 'Bill of Responsibilities' put up along side it."

And although Olson believes people should accept more responsibility for their actions, he also said people should be willing to listen and to not be too judgmental.

"What really qualifies us for this job is our concern," he said, expressing an empathy for the experiences that others bring to policy discussions and a willingness to continually re-evaluate his own positions and opinions.

"Because I say something is true and right, that's what I believe, of course. Another person is going to come into a discussion thinking what they believe is equally true and right, too," he said. "Now, we can keep arguing back and forth or we can choose to step back from our own opinions and attempt to actively understand the other side. That's what I want to do."

Olson credits his family for encouraging him to be objective in his decision-making, as well as fostering in him a work ethic and enthusiasm

he displays in his new job.

"The process itself is an education," he said, acknowledging an occasional wish to slow the job of passing legislation — approving fewer laws and allowing more time for deliberating each proposal — to avoid the task of passing corrective measures year after year.

Yet, for all the enjoyment he derives from work as an elected official, Olson said he knows there will come a time when he will not have that privilege.

"That's okay, whatever time I have here is a gift — whether I'm here for only two years or 10 years. There are things I can do from either inside this place or outside of it."

—Dave Price

District 19A

Population: 32,127
Distribution: 75.1 percent rural, 24.9 percent urban
County: Sherburne, Wright
Largest city: Monticello
Location: central
1992 presidential election results:
 Bush/Quayle: 33.1 percent
 Clinton/Gore: 36.4 percent
 Perot/Stockdale: 29.9 percent
 Other: 0.6 percent