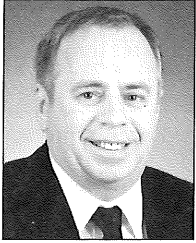


Following Willard Munger's trail

Gauthier strives to give voice to working class

By KRIS BERGGREN

As one of just three new House members from the DFL party, Rep. Kerry Gauthier (DFL-Duluth) is the lone male, but he finds



Rep. Kerry Gauthier

solidarity by checking in with Rep. Rena Moran (DFL-St. Paul), whose office is next to his, and Rep. Marion Greene (DFL-Mpls) whom he sees a bit less frequently.

"It was odd during retreat time," he said, referring to new member orientation activities. "A lot of people assumed I was a Republican." It's also different from his term on the Duluth City Council, which he said was "high profile," including a clash with the mayor over public utilities commission regulation.

Gauthier said he's felt welcome by majority members and is already working with Rep.

Steve Smith (R-Mound) on a bill that would address human trafficking issues, including a proposal to arrest "Johns" as well as offenders in prostitution cases.

Gauthier calls District 7B "a working man's district" where 47 percent of his constituent households earn less than \$25,000 a year. He said it reveals traditional DFL values: protecting the role of unions; putting the brakes on local government aid cuts that could prompt property tax increases; and preserving access to higher education through financial aid and avoiding tuition hikes.

"We only expect you to stand up and tell the truth," is how he characterizes his constituents' expectations. "And that's what they'll get."

Gauthier is on leave from his job as rehabilitation director for a private chemical dependency treatment facility.

To relax, Gauthier likes to walk with his three dogs along the waterfront near his home, and pursue his hobby of photography.

DISTRICT 7B

Population (2009 est.): 38,183

Largest City: Duluth

County: St. Louis

Top Concern: Giving voice to working people's issues

His office walls are adorned with photos of Duluth area landscapes, urban scenes and nature, many his own work.

One image is of a wooden bridge on the Western Waterfront Trail along the St. Louis River, which starts just below The Willard Munger Inn and links with the Willard Munger State Trail, a bike path named for the former representative, social activist and environmental champion who served the same West Duluth district Gauthier now represents.

"I am proud to be able to follow him," Gauthier said.