

## Lawyer Legislators, Part IV

*In 1987 we ran a series of articles on UW Law School graduates engaged in law making as elected officials. Since that time five more of our grads have joined the ranks of the Wisconsin Legislature. If our readers can offer more names, we would be happy to continue these features.*

### David Deininger ('78)

Like many law students today, Representative David Deininger delayed his law school studies to gain experience in another area of life. After earning his undergraduate degree in 1969 from the U.S. Naval Academy, Deininger spent the next six years on active duty as a line officer in the Navy. In 1975, Deininger enrolled as a first year law student at the University of Chicago.

"One of the reasons that I had chosen to go to law school after I had decided that I did not want to make the Navy a twenty or thirty year career was that I felt law school and law practice would allow some flexibility in the future to be involved in politics or other types of things. I saw it as a way to achieve a kind of independence. I saw the practice of law as a last bastion of being independent and being your own boss."

Deininger and his family settled in Monroe where he commuted to Chicago on a weekly basis. At the end of his first year, he had even made arrangements to move his family down to Chicago before deciding to transfer to the UW.

"By this time, we had lived back in Monroe for over a year and decided that we liked it. We made the decision to stay in Wisconsin after I graduated. Then it made much more sense to be attending school at Madison."

Deininger found his legal education to be an excellent preparation for his legislative career.

"The coursework in law school is probably as good a preparation for legislative work as it is for private practice, because you tend to deal with the theory of the law and how the law impacts on society. The law school preparation, theoretical as it is and must be, is a good preparation for a public-policy type career. Having been at both the Chicago law school and UW Law School, one thing I did appreciate at the UW was that



**"I saw it as a way to achieve a kind of independence. I saw the practice of law as a last bastion of being independent and being your own boss."**

the greater emphasis was placed on the practical impact of the law on the rest of the world, whereas the Chicago approach was perhaps a bit more ivory-towered."

Deininger believes that the student body at UW-Madison was a very positive aspect of his legal education.

"At Madison it was a much more relaxed atmosphere. Ninety-nine percent of my fellow freshmen at Chicago were convinced they were going to be Supreme Court Justices some day. It was a very competitive atmosphere, whereas at UW Law School I found a lot less of those types of pressures between students. Students were genuinely more interested in what was happening outside the building. You tended to get quite a cross section of very interesting and committed people at the UW Law School."

After graduating in 1978, Deininger returned to Monroe to practice law and was also hired as corporation counsel for Green County. Throughout this time he became active in local party politics. He was elected chairman of the local Republican party and was also elected to the school board. In 1986 Deininger won election for the state legislative seat and is now in his second term.

"At this point, I'm assuming that I will seek re-election in 1990, but I'm not really looking beyond '92 because 1990 is a census year and we will be re-drawing all the legislative district boundaries. As far as future planning goes, I haven't looked beyond 1992."

### Gregory Huber ('81)

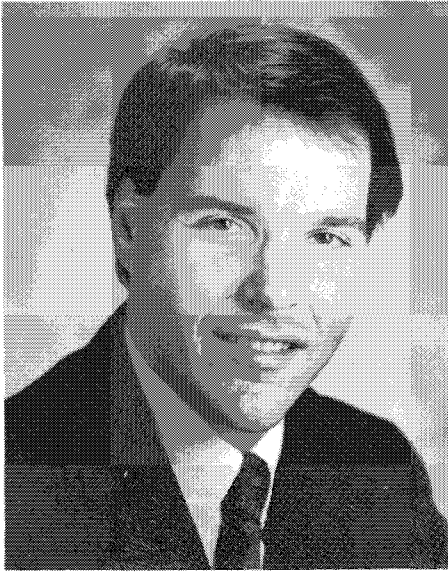
Thirty-three year old Democratic Representative Gregory Huber spent five years as a Marathon County Assistant District Attorney before being elected to the Assembly last November. Huber points out that his career path is unusual in that it is rare for an ADA to run for legislative office.

"I've always been interested in criminal law and planned on working in a district attorney's office when I graduated from law school. While I found politics fascinating, I really didn't think I would ever run for the Legislature," Huber said.

Although Huber never ran for political office prior to winning the seat he now holds, he did volunteer his time to work on other campaigns. He worked on Wausau Mayor John Robinson's campaigns when he was in the Assembly, Mike Hoover's judicial campaign, and Ed Garvey's 1986 U.S. Senate race.

After receiving his political science degree from UW-Madison, Greg attended law school. As for his reasons for choosing law school, Greg says, "I liked the flexibility that a law degree offered. And it was great preparation for working in the Legislature. It gave me a lot of tools for analyzing policy, reading and interpreting statutes and understanding how the big picture fits together."

Huber found some of his more beneficial law courses to be legislation, tax, property, real estate and criminal law. However he feels it is best to be a generalist when choosing law courses. "Get a



**"Get a broad-based liberal education because you don't know what type of law you'll be practicing five or ten years down the road. It's also possible that you'll find yourself in the Legislature."**

broad-based liberal education because you don't know what type of law you'll be practicing five or ten years down the road. It's also possible that you'll find yourself in the Legislature."

Rep. Huber is currently serving on a number of legislative committees. He is vice-chair of the Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety. He also serves on the Health Committee, the Highway Committee and the Ways and Means Committee, which deals with taxation issues.

Huber says that the most rewarding aspect of working in the Assembly is the ability to make a difference on a wide range of issues. "There is great flexibility in the Legislature. You can take your concerns on specific issues and work on them, knowing you have the ability to change things. You can make an impact on the law through any of the committees you are on.

One of the biggest challenges of Greg's new job is having to deal with a lot of different personalities. "There are

Representatives here with almost every point of view. This can be difficult when I'm trying to push through a bill on an issue that I am particularly concerned about. But everyone seems to understand that sometimes we have to be willing to put our partisan differences aside and work together," Huber said.

All in all, Greg is not quick to suggest wholesale changes in the way our state is governed. "As far as I can tell it's working."

### **Mary Hubler ('80)**

Democratic Representative Mary Hubler, now in her third term, never had any intention of pursuing a political career.

"I would never have guessed that I would be in politics today. If you ask my friends from high school, though, they probably wouldn't be surprised."

A former school teacher from Rice Lake, Hubler first became interested in politics after moving to Madison to attend the UW Law School. She worked full-time at the Capitol while attending school full time. When the incumbent for whom she worked decided not to run for re-election in 1984, it seemed natural for Hubler to run for the legislative seat.

"I just thrive on being where the action is. You're at the heartbeat of what is going on in Wisconsin. It's exciting. It's different everyday."

Hubler is currently a member of the Joint Finance Committee and previously worked on such committees as Agriculture, Tourism, Gambling, and Judiciary. Although policy-making interests Hubler, she particularly enjoys working directly with her constituents.

"There are some people who think that the most gratifying thing would be passing bills and changing the law. That's fine, but where I come from people see me more as an advocate for them. The nicest thing is helping people find their way through the mess of state government. Some people thrive on making major policy changes. I think I thrive on just making people happier with state government."

Hubler believes that the bureaucracy of state government should be more responsive to the people of Wisconsin.

"To the state you're just a number. They don't care. But when I call someone in the State bureaucracy, they snap to it.



**"Some people thrive on making major policy changes. I think I thrive on just making people happier with state government."**

It shouldn't have to work that way. I'm just a taxpayer like everybody else."

Although Hubler does not think that being a lawyer makes one a better or worse legislator, she believes that her legal education has helped her in terms of her career.

"A law degree gives you an insight into problems with legislation." [At the Law School] we did a lot more theory than practice. It gives you an opportunity to expand the way you think and look at different legal problems. I think the Law School did a good job of that. If I had to do it all over again, I would pick Wisconsin again and again and again."

Hubler says that she enjoyed many of her professors such as Stewart Macaulay, Neil Komesar, and Walter Dickey.

"One of my favorites was at 7:45 in the morning. I took tax from Professor Irish. He was good. I enjoyed that. And to say that I enjoyed a class at 7:45 says a whole lot about the prof. What could be more boring than taxes at 7:45 in the morning?"

Hubler does not have any particular long-term political goals at this time. She says it is a matter of being at the right place at the right time.

"I may not run for anything else. I may get out of the Assembly in two years and practice law. Right now I'm just real happy doing this. I may run for some other elected office. I never say never anymore."

### **Peggy Lautenschlager ('80)**

Thirty-three year old Democratic Representative Peggy Lautenschlager saw law school as a stepping stone to her political career. Prior to law school she had been very politically active, and although she didn't know what type of law she wanted to practice, she still felt that law school would provide a marketable degree and offer options in allowing her to continue with her political interests.

After obtaining a degree in history and math at Wake Forest College, she went on to receive her J.D. at Madison. During her undergraduate years she worked as a staff person and volunteer on a number of political campaigns, including the 1976 Carter for President Campaign. She has remained active with the Democratic Party since 1980.

Although Lautenschlager did not run for any political office during law school, she did work for the Senate Democratic Caucus and The Democratic Party of Wisconsin. In 1984 she ran for the State Senate and although she lost that election she felt that her background in law helped her to be more familiar with the entire process. Since being elected to the

---

**"As a legislator, I enjoy the opportunity to go from one issue to another at a quick pace. In a day's work I can go from discussing ground water contamination to the implementation of a headstart program. I never get bored."**

---



Assembly in 1988, she believes her law background definitely has assisted her: "Law School prepares you for the Legislature in that it helps you to be familiar with statutory language, with what law can and cannot do, and with the budgeting process and the passing of legislation.

Prior to joining the Legislature, Lautenschlager was appointed in 1985, by Governor Tony Earl, as the District Attorney for Winnebago County. She won the election for the position in 1986 and remained there until the end of 1988.

Lautenschlager states that although most District Attorneys eventually run for judicial office or go into private practice as litigators, quite a few legislators now in office have been former district attorneys.

For Lautenschlager it was more of "coming back to the Legislature." She states "Being in the Legislature is very different from the D.A.'s office where you are dealing with human tragedy on a daily basis. As a prosecutor you can feel that you are stuck in the system as a middleman within the entire operation. The cases you take on are there because of laws the Legislature makes and options which law enforcement people take when it comes to arresting. As a legislator, you can have more of a long-term effect on how the system works."

Lautenschlager believes that as a legislator it's good to have experienced being in the middle because you can understand the frustration that individuals feel when they have to deal with laws that the Legislature passes. You discover that what looks good in print isn't subject to easy implementation.

For Lautenschlager the most challenging aspect of her job is the demand that she become very well informed on a diversity of issues. Yet this is the aspect of the legislative process that she likes most. Lautenschlager is attracted by the challenge of having too many irons in the fire. "I have a difficult time focusing on only one or two topics of interest. As a legislator, I enjoy the opportunity to go from one issue to another at a quick pace. In a day's work I can go from discussing ground water contamination to the implementation of a headstart program. I never get bored."

Yet, the legislator recognizes that you cannot be an expert on all issues. So most members specialize in one or two areas of primary importance to them. For Lautenschlager, one of the difficult tasks she faces is to determine her niche in the legislative scheme of things.

One of her strong interests is education. She worked as a teacher's aide while in undergraduate school and both of her parents are school teachers. She also has two children, Joshua and Ryan, who attend public schools in Fond du Lac.

Lautenschlager is also interested in criminal justice, drug and alcohol abuse, and environmental issues. She is currently Vice-Chair of both environmental committees: Natural Resources, and Environmental Resources and Utilities. She also serves on the Aging, Education, and Judiciary Committees.

A large part of her legislative day is spent helping constituents. Making sure she is accessible to people in her district is especially important.

Although Lautenschlager feels the legislative process in Wisconsin is a good one, she thinks the Legislative Branch in Wisconsin is relatively weak as compared to the Executive Branch.

"The Governor has incredible line veto power and this, along with the diffi-

culty in getting final agreement in the complicated legislative process, makes the Governor a very powerful player. We have moved away from the Constitutional ideal of three co-equal branches of government and structurally that's bad." She goes on to state, "The legislative branch as an institution is only as good as the sum of its parts, but the entire body of the Legislature is very representative of the people of Wisconsin as it should be. The Legislature as a whole has a lot to offer."

When asked if Lautenschlager had aspirations to attain higher office, she responded, "One thing you learn quickly when you seek elected office is that if you start thinking about long-term planning you get the cart before the horse and forget about who elected you and why. You hold the position because of the good will of the constituents who elected you. You are subject to the will of the vote. Right now I'm just happy being in the Assembly. A two-year term is a long enough look into the future."

### William Te Winkle ('79)

Even before his election to the Wisconsin State Senate in 1986, William Te Winkle participated actively in politics. After graduating from the UW Law School in 1979, Te Winkle returned to Sheboygan to practice law and was elected Chairperson of the Sheboygan County Democratic Party. After losing in a recount election for the State Assembly seat in 1984, he was elected Senator two years later. Although he says that his legal education has aided him in many ways, Te Winkle does not believe that a law degree is a necessary prerequisite to be in politics.

"I think that it is essential that the Legislature have a cross section of the state as its membership. The Legislature should not have too many lawyers. I think it's good when the legislature does have some people who by profession are lawyers, because I think we do bring something to the process by way of our background and training. But so do electricians and so do farmers. Everybody



has a unique background that they bring to the legislative process. I wouldn't want to see the legislature dominated by lawyers at all, but I think the current mix is pretty good."

Te Winkle believes that his legal education and experiences at the Law School have been useful to him and his political career.

"The diverse nature of the student body was helpful because just sitting through class discussions you would be challenged that your thinking was not necessarily the only way the world ought to run. It gave you an understanding of the broad range of public opinion on a lot of different issues."

Te Winkle stresses the importance of the relationship between the law and society and credits the Law School for emphasizing this theory.

"The professors were able to convey a sense of how the law fits into society, and it wasn't just an abstract study. I think that is a real important part of a legal education, especially today, because lawyers continue to go into so many different

"I think it's good when the legislature does have some people who by profession are lawyers, because I think we do bring something to the process by way of our background and training. But so do electricians and so do farmers."

occupations. I think that the emphasis on how law affects society and not just on the black letter rules is important. It certainly was helpful to me."

Te Winkle notes that Professor Sam Mermin and Professor Zile were most memorable to him.

"I had Professor Zile for a Soviet law course. He was able to make a subject come alive. By studying another system of law it gives a much deeper understanding about our American system. That class was a good experience."

Te Winkle now chairs a new committee which he had requested to be created, the Committee on Science, Technology, Communications and Energy. This project tries to take advantage of the wealth of research resources at Wisconsin colleges and universities.

"We will try to have a better transfer of technology from the laboratory to the marketplace. We as a state are significantly behind other states in terms of developing new technologies for the marketplace. I think that this is an area for continued job creation and economic growth, given our abundant resources for development and commercialization of new technologies."

Te Winkle admits that although he has no firm plans, he will probably seek reelection next year.

"Beyond that, anything is possible."