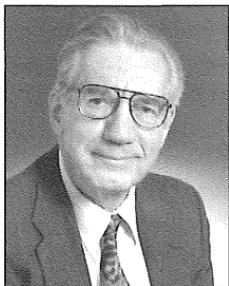


Longtime legislator passes away



Sen. Sam Solon

and was the second-most senior member of the Senate, behind Majority Leader Roger Moe (DFL-Erskine).

A retired junior high school social studies teacher, Solon was first elected to the House in 1970. He then served nine terms in the Senate beginning in 1972.

Gov. Jesse Ventura said colleagues thought of Solon “as a quiet and thoughtful legislator who always put the interests of his district first.”

He was the son of two Greek immigrants, Nick and Dimitra Eliopoulos, who later changed the family surname to Solon. Ironically, that name was shared by a famous statesman and lawmaker in ancient Athens.

Rep. Mary Murphy (DFL-Hermantown), a House member since 1976, said she knew

Flags at state buildings flew at half-staff the first weekend of January to honor Sen. Sam Solon (DFL-Duluth) who died from cancer Dec. 28.

Solon, 70, served in the Legislature for more than 30 years

before they both became legislators — serving with him on a union board and teaching with him in Duluth.

“He was a caring man who respected his students and expected respect back,” Murphy said. “When he gave you his word you knew you could count on it.”

Murphy said Solon was the type of legislator who always made visitors to the Capitol comfortable, such as offering his office as a place for visitors from the northland to put their coats.

“He just was respectful of other people and never put himself above anybody,” she said. “He was non-threatening and resourceful, always willing to help others. He wasn’t just interested in his own projects but everybody’s projects.”

Murphy said that she and other Duluth area legislators met with Solon last November, and that he was looking forward to returning to St. Paul this session.

Rep. Mike Jaros (DFL-Duluth), a 13-term House member, worked with Solon on several pieces of legislation on behalf of the city.

Although they didn’t always agree, particularly when it came to economic development and social justice issues, Jaros said

Solon was always an “easy person to work with.”

“He was one of the best PR people you could have,” Jaros said. “He knew how to deal with people. He didn’t create enemies.”

Solon chaired the Senate Commerce Committee for a decade. He also was a longtime member of the Senate Higher Education Budget Division.

Last August he was honored by his alma mater, the University of Minnesota-Duluth, which named a student services building after him. Solon was a 1958 graduate of the school with a Bachelor of Arts degree in social science.

“He is a loyal friend with vision, commitment, and leadership who has helped guide UMD in its role of academic excellence and accessibility to all Minnesotans,” Chancellor Kathryn Martin said. “We are enormously grateful for all that he has done.”

Solon is survived by his wife Yvonne Prettner Solon (who was elected Jan. 29 to finish his Senate term), four children, a sister, three brothers, and his mother.

(D. MAEDA)