

2clips

Up to

THE TASK

Legislator pulled double duty while in state office

By TOM KIRVAN
Legal News

(One of a continuing series of profiles on members of the state House Judiciary Committee.)

It's not often that a staunch Democrat has something in common with John Engler, former three-term Michigan governor with a national reputation for his conservative political ways.

But Andy Meisner, Democratic state representative for the 27th District in Oakland County, is proud to share common ground with one of the longtime darlings of the GOP who currently is president of the National Association of Manufacturers in the nation's capital.

In fact, Meisner also has a legal kinship of sorts with Paul Hillegonds, former Republican speaker of the House of Representatives and current vice president for DTE Energy, one of the giant utilities in the U.S.

Politics, after all, does make for some strange bedfellows on occasion, Meisner admitted.

While Engler and Hillegonds are effectively removed from state politics in their current positions in the private sector, Meisner has a

bond with the Republican duo that will never be broken.

Each earned his law degree while serving full time in the state legislature.

"It certainly wasn't an easy road to travel on the way to a law degree, but it's a path I followed with the likes of John Engler and Paul Hillegonds," Meisner said while nibbling on a pastry in his Lansing office. "While it was a challenge in terms of time management, in retrospect I wouldn't have done it any other way. Learning the law helped me bring a better balance to my political views and forced me to look at both sides of the issue before making a decision."

Meisner, a resident of Ferndale with his wife, Johnna, aspired to be an attorney from an early age.

"I dreamed of being a civil rights attorney," said Meisner, who is past the midway point in his third term in office. "Going to law school was always something that I wanted to do. It just took me a little bit longer to begin that journey."

Meisner's early fascination with the law was spurred by his late father, Anthony, an attorney and adjunct professor at Wayne State University Law School. His father died in 2001 at age 58 after suffering for years from the effects of bipolar disorder.