

Island Students Enjoy Opportunity To Talk With Congressman Stupak

By Karen Gould

By the time the ferry boat docked on Mackinac Island, passenger Bart Stupak's schedule already was being modified to include a stop at the school. Congressman Stupak took up an offer made by Island school board member Leanne Brodeur, who happened to be on the same boat, to visit with Island students following his planned town hall meeting, Friday, April 21.

After talking with Island residents, Congressman Stupak walked from the Community Hall on Market Street and then headed north on Cadotte Avenue toward the Island's 82-student school.

As students in grades two through 12 found seats on the gymnasium's bleachers, Congressman Stupak's wireless e-mail system, which he is required to carry, began alerting him to incoming messages. He told students that the last-minute addition to his schedule that included visiting with them had not been updated on his itinerary yet, so people in Washington were e-mailing him messages.

He told students the tiny hand-held device, which includes a global positioning system, was issued to all congressmen following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. He said at that time, about six members of Congress could not be located, and he was one of them. He happened to be in Detroit and about to get on a flight, he told them.

"They worked everywhere in the world, except northern Michigan," he said, when he first got the device. Since then, technology has improved, and so has the reception. The communication system now works in northern Michigan, he added, holding up the unit for students to see.

He told students that a congressman's district is based on population and that his district represents 662,563 people. It is 600 miles long, stretching from the Keewauwa Peninsula in the Upper Peninsula to Bay City.

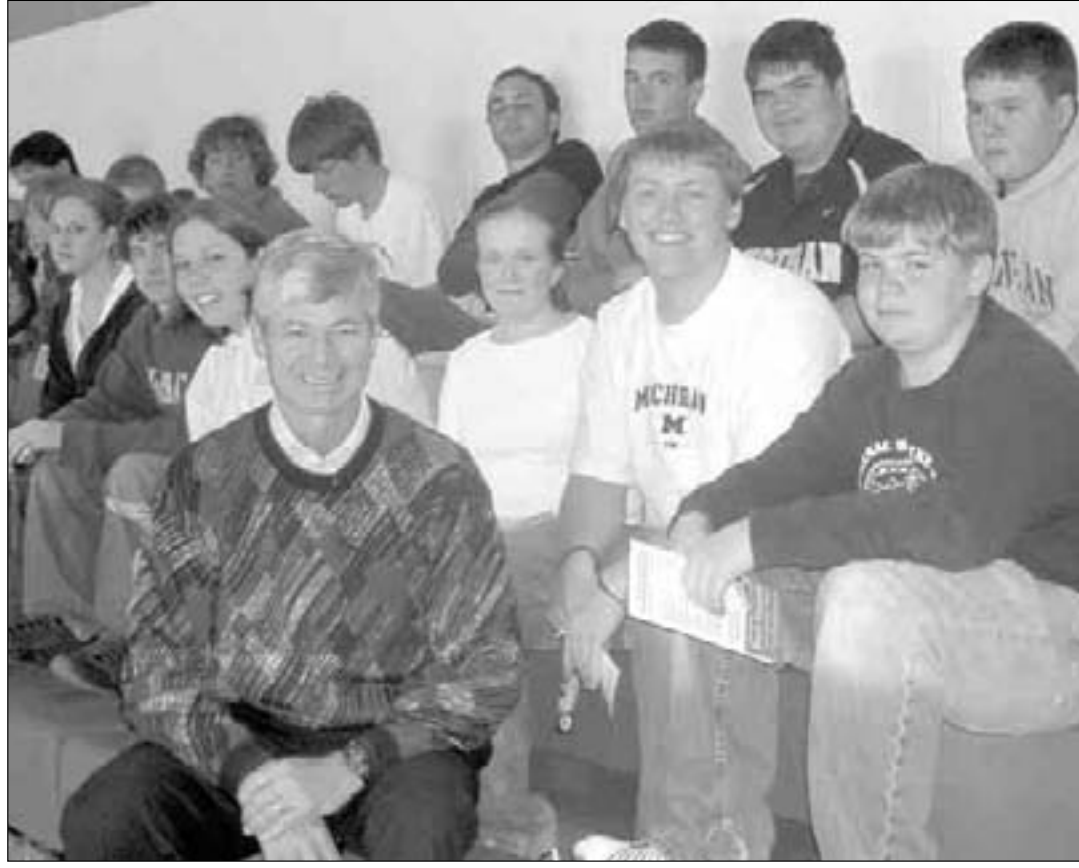
"I have the largest Congressional District of those states that have more than one member of Congress," he said.

Congressional districts are delineated very carefully based on population, and his district is a good example, he said. In Williams Township outside Bay City, one side of the street of a trailer park is in his district, and the other side of the street is in the Fifth Congressional District.

Making his second visit to the school, Congressman Stupak, whose father was a school superintendent, invited students to ask him questions, and they did, on topics ranging from national to local issues. Student's queried the congressman about job outsourcing, the environment, President Bush, high gas prices, and the Great Lakes.

Students also wanted to know what he liked about his job, what he considers his greatest accomplishment, and Michigan's future.

"Probably the biggest satisfaction I get (from my job) is helping out someone," he said offering the examples of assisting people with Social Security



At left: Congressman Bart Stupak of Menominee, who represents Michigan's First Congressional District, made his second visit to Mackinac Island Public School, answering students' questions ranging from regional to national in scope.

of waste water into the lakes.

On the local level, he told students it could be four years before Michigan sees an economic turnaround.

"Michigan's going through some changes because it is based on a manufacturing economy," he said. He told students that the future for Michigan is in high tech jobs, adding that Governor Jennifer Granholm had just passed a bill to allow Michigan to bond \$1 billion to create those jobs.

"I think we've turned the corner in Michigan and we're heading in the right direction," said Congressman Stupak.

"We're going through a tough time now, but I think we'll be OK," he added.

issues and helping veterans with health benefit concerns.

He said what he thinks he

has done that will last the longest is providing legislation

to preserve and protect the

Great Lakes with a law that stops drilling, the sale of Great Lakes water, and the blending

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