Finding Aid to the
James A. Berg Legislative Papers

Berg, James A., 1930-1997
James A. Berg Legislative Papers, 1988-1997
4 linear ft.
Collection number: Mss 277

Biography Scope and Content Box and Folder List

OVERVIEW

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BIOGRAPHY

James (Jim) Arthur Berg was born August 22, 1930 in Rolette, North Dakota. He attended school in Bisbee, N.D. and graduated there in 1948. He graduated from North Dakota State University (NDSU) in 1952. After serving in the United Sates Army during the Korean War, Berg returned to NDSU to complete a master's degree in agricultural economics. On December 18, 1956, he married Nona Benson in Cando, North Dakota. The couple had four children together. They lived in Devils Lake, N.D., where he was the assistant county agent for the Ramsey County Extension Service. They later moved to Steele,

N.D. where he served as county extension agent for Kidder County. In 1962 he started working in agricultural communications at NDSU.

After his retirement in 1987, Berg served as director of Great Plains Food Bank in Fargo and governor of the Dakotas-Manitoba-Minnesota District of Optimist International. As a Democrat, Berg served in both the North Dakota House of Representatives and the State Senate for District 44 in Fargo. He was elected to the House of Representatives in 1992 after two previously failed campaigns. In 1994 he was again defeated, but was later elected to the state senate in 1996.

Berg was noted for his work as a foster parent and for helping refugees resettle in the area. He was concerned with children's issues and focused much of his work in the state legislature on youth services. He was known for playing the role of Santa for Santa Village in Fargo's Island Park for ten years. As an active member of the Lutheran Church he took part in missions to Mexico and the Middle East. Berg died in office as a state senator on September 20, 1997.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The state legislative papers of James Berg contain records from his campaigns as well as papers from his term as Representative in the 53rd Legislative Assembly and papers from his term as Senator in the 55th Legislative Assembly. These records consist largely of correspondence and also files pertaining to the issues he was most concerned with, such as youth services. The papers have been organized into six series: Campaign, Newsletter, Correspondence, 53rd Legislative Assembly: North Dakota House of Representatives, 55th Legislative Assembly: North Dakota Senate, and Subject Files.

The **Campaign Series** includes a variety of information related to Berg's various campaigns for state office beginning in 1988. This series consists of correspondence, information from the Democratic-NPL state conventions, campaign documents and materials, information from the District 44 Democratic-NPL committee, campaign manuals, newspaper articles, editorials, press releases, and various other resource materials.

The **Newsletter Series** consists of two newsletters, *Dem-NPL New Candidate Newsletter* (Issues1-6), and *The Leader* (July 1990-August 1994, March 1997). The *Dem-NPL New Candidate Newsletter* was an informational and motivational newsletter for Democrats running for the state legislature. *The Leader* was the newsletter for the state Democratic-NPL party.

The **Correspondence Series** includes a general range of correspondence sent to James Berg that was filed alphabetically. The correspondence spans the years from 1992 to 1994, but the majority of the letters are from 1994. The correspondence in this file is general in nature. Many of the letters are from organized groups explaining their positions on certain issues, and agencies and officials of the North Dakota State government generated some of the letters.

The **53rd Legislative Assembly (1993): North Dakota House of Representatives Series** contains papers from Jim Berg's term as a North Dakota State Representative. Berg was elected in November of

1992 and served in the 53 Legislative Assembly of 1993-1994. This series contains information about bills that Berg was interested in, sponsored, or worked closely with. The series also includes a great deal of correspondence. In addition to bills and correspondence, this series includes orientation information, directories, Governor George A. Sinner's State of the State address, agendas and correspondence from the House Dem-NPL Caucus, a weekly legislative summary newsletter, press releases and information from press conferences, as well as other resource material. There are also general resource files about various organizations and agencies within the state of North Dakota that Berg was interested in.

The correspondence is found throughout the series as it was sometimes filed along with other material according to topic. The correspondence files include letters from the Legislative Council, general correspondence, and correspondence regarding particular bills, organizations, and issues. There are also files of correspondence received and sent. There is also a great deal of correspondence from Berg's constituents requesting that he vote for their particular interest.

Included in this series are records from the Budget Committee on Youth Services. Berg served on this committee during the legislative interim period of 1993-1994. These papers include meeting minutes and agendas as well as a variety of reports and resource material. There are transcripts of testimony given before the committee as well as bills considered by the committee. The interests of the committee ranged from complex issues faced by disabled children and sexually and physically abused children, to general childcare, education, and family issues affecting all children. The papers include several reports commissioned by the committee analyzing the various conditions faced by children in the state of North Dakota.

The **55th Legislative Assembly (1997): North Dakota Senate Series** contains papers from Jim Berg's term as a North Dakota State Senator. Berg was elected in November of 1996 and was serving in the 55 Legislative Assembly of 1997-1998 when he died in office. This series contains files on the bills that Berg was interested in, sponsored, or worked closely with. The series also includes correspondence, orientation information, directories, and resource files about various organizations and issues that interested Berg.

The **Subject Files Series** contains newspaper clippings from 1996-1997 and an assortment of documents related to issues and organizations in which Berg was interested.

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3/4 *North Dakota's Children: A Chartbook Perspective 1993*
3/5 *North Dakota Comprehensive Study Proposal* (June 24, 1993)
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3/7 *North Dakota Children's Services Study Working Outline: Preliminary Draft of Findings and Recommendations* (Aug. 3-4, 1994)
3/8 *Child Sexual Abuse in North Dakota: Preliminary Report* (Aug. 2-3, 1994)
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3/10 *Investing in the Future: Promoting the Well-Being of North Dakota's Children and Families* (Draft: Oct. 12, 1994)
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