

■ Former U.S. Rep. William Delahunt, left, Victoria Kennedy, wife of the late U.S. Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, U.S. Rep. William Keating and Vice President Joe Biden share the stage during a campaign event in Quincy in 2010. Keating defeated Republican candidate Jeff Perry in the Massachusetts 10th congressional district election. ASSOCIATED PRESS

'Pinch-yourself moments'

Bill Keating adjusts to a hectic schedule nine months into his congressional term

By Taylor Bigler
PATRIOT LEDGER WASHINGTON BUREAU

A black-and-white photo of the original Dunkin' Donuts in Quincy decorates freshman Congressman Bill Keating's office in Washington. There is also a Red Sox poster with Jonathan Papelbon's signature scrawled in Sharpie as well as a vintage photo of cranberry bog workers.

Although his office on Capitol Hill is 450 miles from his district in Massachusetts, Keating's office is adorned with reminders of home.

But none of these photos are as poignant as the photograph of young Congressman John F. Kennedy at work in the same office where Keating now spends his time.

"The history is humbling. It truly is. It's not just in this office, it's the history of Massachusetts being such a big part of our country's history," Keating said.

It's been less than nine months since Keating, 59, was sworn in as U.S. Rep. for Massachusetts' 10th District. He is still adjusting to a home that isn't home, workdays that seem endless, twice-weekly plane rides between Washington and the district, event-packed weekends and a culture of partisan divisiveness that came as something of a surprise, even to a man who has held elective office for nearly 35 years and has spent his entire adult life in politics.

"It feels like 10 years," he said of his time in Congress.

In Washington, Keating's days begin at 6 in the morning. He wakes up in his tiny basement apartment and walks the

four minutes it takes to get to his office on Capitol Hill.

A Tuesday in early September was typical. Keating had an early morning breakfast briefing, followed by meetings with constituents from the district. Each meeting seems to run about 15 minutes behind schedule, putting his already jam-packed day into overdrive.

He was running 15 minutes late on the way to a hearing with a Congressional Committee on Small Business, but stopped to chat with Rep. Gerald Connolly, D-Virginia.

"This is how the day gets away from us," his press secretary Lauren Amendolara said.

But Keating is intent on soaking up every bit of Washington.

"You've got the 'pinch yourself moments,'" Keating said. "Am I really having this opportunity?"

During the day, Keating was whisked from meetings to hearings to the House floor for a vote, at least one of his seven staff members always at his side.

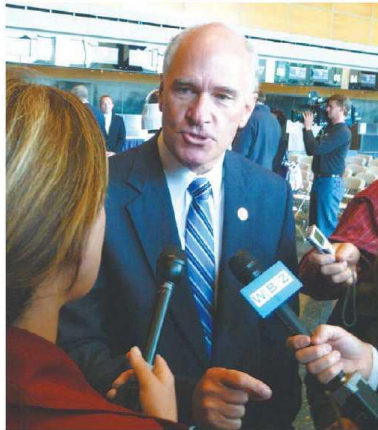
His exercise is the "Washington walk," the brisk pace that members of Congress and their staff members adopt as they go from committee hearings and offices to the House chamber for roll call votes, and then back again.

His only rest comes at the end of the day at his apartment, which he described as far from homey.

"It's a bed, and that's it. As soon as I get up I'm out the door," Keating said. "When I'm down here, it's a business trip. I still have the sense that my feet are still planted at home in the district."

Keating was born in Norwood and was raised and lived in Sharon until he decided to run for Congress. He already owned a home in the 10th District — in Bourne — but Sharon is in the 4th District, represented by Barney Frank of Newton. Early in the campaign, he began renting a home in Quincy, the 10th District's most populous community.

He has been in elected office nearly his entire adult life, first to the state House of Representatives in 1977 when he was 26. He became a state senator in 1985, the same year he got a law degree from Suffolk University. He left the



■ U.S. Rep. Keating and members of the Homeland Security Committee talk about airline security at Logan Airport on Sept. 17.

State House in 1999 after being elected Norfolk County District Attorney.

Keating serves on three Congressional committees: Small Business, Foreign Affairs and Homeland Security, where he has made headlines by criticizing national transportation officials about the security around airports, which in some cases amounts to little more than a chain-link fence. He became vocal on the issue last year when a North Carolina teenager sneaked aboard a Boston-bound plane at the airport in Charlotte. The 16-year-old's frozen body fell from the sky onto a quiet Milton street as the plane's landing gear was lowered.

Another top priority is the creation of new jobs in the district, Keating said. "One job he isn't concerned about? His own, he said.

When congressional district maps are redrawn this fall, the state will lose one seat and the 10th is in the sights of lawmakers.

"I am much more concerned about people who don't have their own jobs. There are thousands in our district, so I'm not going to preoccupy myself with who doesn't get one job," he said.

Veteran U.S. Rep. Barney Frank, D-Newton, who has called Keating a per-

sonal friend since their days in the Massachusetts Legislature, said Keating has done well during his first months in Washington. It's difficult for freshmen lawmakers to feel like they are making a difference, particularly when they serve in the minority, he said.

"Congress is a very puzzling business, but he's been very well-respected," Frank said of Keating.

Keating said the strong party divide came as a surprise, as did the influence of the Ten Party.

"Being from Massachusetts, we sometimes forget that," he said.

Keating tries to stay clear of partisan divisiveness by borrowing a bit of wisdom from a John Quincy Adams quote displayed in his office waiting area.

"Always vote for principle, though you may vote alone, and you may cherish the sweetest reflection that your vote is never lost," the quote reads.

"That quote is a good lesson every day as I'm walking through here," Keating said. "If you do what you think is right, even if it's not the most popular thing, you will be doing the right thing for yourself."

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