Congressman Surprised at Life on Hill

BY FRED MOGUL
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As frustrating as the political process is, Capitol Hill is a surprisingly spiritual place where elected representatives really do vote their conscience and government slowly, steadily progresses toward the good, a California congressman told an Omaha audience Sunday.

Walter Capps, a first-term Democrat from California, commented on some of the differences between his work as the chairman of the religious studies department at the University of California at Santa Barbara and his work as a politician. There have been few changes, like getting used to parliamentary language and ingratiating taps on the arm by fellow congressmen, but Capps has been delighted to find that political life can be at times more intellectual than academic life and, in a way, less "political."

"What goes on on campus is far less forthright and candid than what goes on in Congress," Capps said. "Politics in Congress is easier. There are fewer hidden agendas."

An Omaha native, Capps was in town for a family reunion and the 45th reunion of his class from Benson High School. He also was invited to give the fourth annual Markoe-DePores Social Justice Lecture at Creighton University. The series honors the Rev. John Markoe, a Creighton professor who founded the DePores club to fight racial injustice.

If the agendas are less hidden in Congress, that doesn't mean they don't exist. Capps said he understood why Americans are so frustrated at the chronic gridlock in the political process.

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