He’s the son of a public servant and at the head of a family devoted to serving the great state of Michigan.

He has spent virtually his whole career in public service, making an early start of what would become four decades of work for what now adds up to five governors.

He hadn’t even graduated with the last of his two degrees from Michigan State University before he was put to number-crunching work by the powerful chairman (Rep. George Montgomery, for those who remember) of the Michigan House Taxation Committee.

He promised Chairman Montgomery four months of work, but stayed for four years, taking a month off to work 40 hours a week to put the finishing touches on his MSU doctorate. He would say goodbye – with flowers – to the committee chair before moving up the ladder to a career that would carry him to state government’s highest executive offices.

With this year’s Michigan Political Leadership Program events, we take the time to honor Douglas Beedle Roberts, Ph.D., who played key roles in changing the course of K-12 education and the state's major business and property taxes.

Doug Roberts is retiring this year as director at MSU’s Institute for Public Policy and Social Research. It is IPPSR that is home to MPLP, Public Policy Forums, Office for Survey Research and State of the State Survey. Doug Roberts has guided these programs for the past dozen years.

“It has been my great pleasure to work with Doug Roberts at Michigan State University,” MSU President Lou Anna K. Simon said. “We are proud that Doug Roberts is a Spartan. His saga is one of individual strength, collective power and extraordinary impact not simply for MSU, but for the people of Michigan. The impact of his work will last for many, many years. I know that Doug will continue to make a difference in the years ahead, albeit without a paycheck or a formal title. Spartans Will!”

From the House Taxation Committee, Roberts would move up quickly in the next few years. He was tapped as director of the state’s Office of Revenue and Tax Analysis, director of the Office of the State Employer, deputy director and acting director of the Office of Management and Budget, deputy superintendent of public instruction and as director of the Senate Fiscal Agency.

In 1991, Gov. John Engler named Roberts to the job he would hold for 10 years – Michigan’s Treasurer. Roberts was charged with overseeing economic and revenue forecasting, tax administration, common cash and banking functions and as sole fiduciary for the state’s four major pension funds. His responsibilities included managing the state’s cash position valued from $50 million to $800 million on any given day, $42 billion in pension funds and 1,400 people in the Department of Treasury.

**Roberts’ Legacy**

Roberts’ state government service has been bipartisan. He has worked in the administrations of Republican Govs. William G. Milliken, Engler and Rick Snyder, and in those of Democratic Govs. James Blanchard and Jennifer Granholm. He is considered an architect of what is now known as Proposal A, designed to add fairness and equity to state property taxes.

He is current chair of the State Tax Commission and former chairman and member of the Board of Trustees of Northern Michigan University. He holds an honorary doctorate in public policy from Central Michigan University and is a graduate of the Program for Senior Executives in State and Local Government at the Kennedy School of Government of Harvard University.

As he departs IPPSR, Roberts is proud of MPLP’s nearly 600 graduates, half who have graduated during his tenure. Fully half of MPLP’s alumni, since the program started in 1992, have made their own mark in public service. Last November, seven won election to the state House and four won seats in the state Senate, a new record for MPLP alumni serving together in the chamber.

“Everyone in the College of Social Science will miss Doug as Director of IPPSR”, said College Dean Marietta Baba. “We will continue to build on his leadership in the years to come, and are very glad that he will continue to work with the College and IPPSR as Professor Emeritus.”

For the future, he plans a busy schedule in private and public life and in his new role as Emeritus Professor.

Roberts and his wife Roberta have four sons and seven grandchildren.