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As a commemorative part of the town's Sesquicentennial, several other eighth grade students and I were invited to participate in Student Government Day. Being given a chance to do something in town that hadn't been done in 50 years, I didn't pass up the opportunity to spend a day at the town hall shadowing town officials.

To start off we were sworn into our positions for the day. Since I had been chosen to be an assessor, my fellow assessors and I were then led to the Assessors' Office. Besides what our parents had told us, I don't think any of us really knew what an assessor does. We soon learned that they assess, or give an estimate on the value of, a home or business; thus, determining how much the personal property taxes will be.

I also learned that the town of Acushnet is mainly a residential town, meaning that the number of homes in town greatly outnumbered the number of businesses; and that both real and personal property taxes are based on the state of your house as of January 1st of that year. Therefore, any changes made after that date won't appear on the assessment until the following year.

This might sound a little naïve, but never having realized that the money that pays for teachers, garbage pick-up, and such things has to come from somewhere; I was taken aback when we were told that if not for the assessors, both those who get paid and the volunteers, we wouldn't have teachers or the convenience of having our garbage picked up rather than having to haul it to the dump.

After we were given what I was surprised to realize was just a brief summary of all their duties, we were given a chance to look at the assessments of our homes. We checked to make sure everything was correct because as we learned, assessors have to give values based on fair cash value so saying a home has three full baths versus one would

greatly increase the fair cash value, and therefore increasing the personal property taxes.

While looking at the assessment of her home, another one of the student assessors realized that there was a mistake. With the mistake corrected, her parents are now paying less in taxes. To my mother's disappointment, I was not so lucky.

We were also given a chance to pull up the deeds to our homes. While doing this, we learned that sometimes when a change is made concerning your deed there is a fee. A change on the deed to my house was made at the cost of one dollar.

After the assessor taught us everything they could about their job in that short period of time, we went to the Century House here in town for a luncheon with the Town Officials. While we were there Miss Acushnet 2010, Phoebe Laplante, gave a moving speech about the rewards of being a leader wherever life may lead you. Selectman Wojnar said that with us having inspired them to do so, he and the other town officials agreed that they would make Student Government an annual occurrence.

Overall, participating in Student Government was a rewarding experience and I'm glad I was given the chance to take part.