

Now is the time

After eight years in the House, Daggett says someone else should have privilege of participating in the legislative process

By DAVID MAEDA

Prior to her election to the House in 1994, Rep. Roxann Daggett (R-Frazee) was a motivational speaker giving presentations to groups about time management and goal setting.

After making strides on many of her legislative goals, she has decided to allow someone else to take part in the lawmaking process.

"When I made the decision to run I knew it wasn't something I would do forever and I really thought eight years was a good number," she said. "Because we are a citizen Legislature, I think of how many others should have the opportunity to do this."

She considered not running two years ago, but her husband, Dave, encouraged her to seek re-election and see how the redistricting process would affect her district.

When the new boundaries were unveiled in March, Daggett, who moved to Frazee when she was 5 years old and now lives a mile outside the city limits, lost the city as part of her district. She and her husband then made a mutual decision that it was indeed time to step down.

Daggett's professional background provided good training for her House experience, she said. Having served as state president of a volunteer community service organization that has since become the Women of Today, she spent 15 years speaking to business and women's groups.

She said that one of the most satisfying parts of her speaking career was being able to "motivate people to do things that they probably never thought about doing."

Now she says she is looking forward to returning to her speaking career because "I have a lot more material."

Daggett originally decided to run for the Legislature in part because she felt the state's workers' compensation premiums and taxes were causing businesses to leave Minnesota.

Major modifications were made to the workers' compensation system the year following her election, and she said it was encouraging to participate and see that changes can indeed occur.

Another issue central to her initial campaign,



PHOTO BY ANDREW VON BANK

Rep. Roxann Daggett is leaving the Legislature after four terms, saying it is time for someone else from her area to take part in the lawmaking process.

welfare reform, also soon became law through the actions of both federal and state lawmakers.

But she cites her involvement in tax policy as one of her proudest accomplishments. Daggett served eight years on the House Taxes Committee, the last four as vice-chair.

She admits that she didn't have much formal background on tax law prior to her committee work "other than I knew I did not want to raise taxes," but she said she is proud of the changes made during the past few years, including income and property tax rate reductions.

"I felt like I was getting a Ph.D. in tax and I'm still probably in the first year because it's a very complicated area of our government," she said. "We tried, and I think we've done some good legislation towards trying to make our tax code simpler."

Along with working on a satisfactory final product comes a certain awe in just being part of the Legislature for Daggett.

"I remember the first time we had the state of the state (the governor's annual policy speech), standing in the House chamber," she said. "First the Senate comes in and all the Supreme Court justices, and the past governors, and all the constitutional officers ... and I'm sitting there looking at all these people thinking, 'Wow this is fantastic.' And there have been many moments I felt like that."

Rep. Dan McElroy (R-Burnsville), who also serves on the tax committee, describes Daggett as "steady, positive, and always incredibly dependable. I will miss her and the process will miss her."

McElroy said that in addition to her tax contributions, Daggett has carried a number of "tough bills" including a telemarketing no-call-list measure and a prevailing wage proposal that helped make the way easier for subsequent bills.


Rep. Ann Lenczewski (DFL-Bloomington) said it was a "great experience" being able to learn from Daggett's Greater Minnesota perspective while serving on the taxes committee.

"There's always a lot of professionalism and integrity to her work," Lenczewski said. "She did a great job representing rural Minnesota."

Daggett looks forward to spending more time with her husband, two children, and two grandchildren. Her father was also excited to hear news about her decision not to run again.

"He said 'Oh good you can go fishing with me now,'" Daggett said, referencing all the time spent campaigning and attending meetings.

Still, Daggett says she'll look back fondly at her years in the House.

"It has been such an incredible opportunity, and I feel so lucky to have had the privilege of serving here," she said. "There's so few people that get this opportunity and I was the lucky one that got to serve." 

STEPPING DOWN

Rep. Roxann Daggett
Republican
District 11A — Frazee
Terms: 4

Career notes: Daggett is currently the chair of the House Ethics Committee, and she serves on the main tax committee, both its divisions, and the capital investment committee. She has successfully sponsored an income tax credit for long-term care and a plan allowing for reciprocal hunting licenses between Minnesota and North Dakota.