

# Four-term legislator gears up for more door-knocking

By Nicole Wood



Don't be surprised if Rep. Edwina Garcia (DFL-Richfield) shows up on your doorstep in the next few months.

Garcia has decided to leave the House after four terms to run for the office of secretary of state. And she loves door-to-door campaigning.

"I would probably door-knock even out of office — just to talk," she said during a recent interview. "Sometimes I knock so hard, the skin on my knuckles starts peeling. People invite you in and ask for help with things — I have even helped people unclog sinks."

Garcia believes it is of utmost importance for elected officials to go out into the communities they represent and visit the nursing homes, hospitals, veterans homes, and even the casinos.

"If you really want to know what's in people's hearts or how they've overcome adversity, go out there and talk to them and listen to them," she said. "If you don't, how can you be the judge of how some people live or don't live?"

Garcia grew up poor in Clovis, N.M., which is about one hundred miles west of Amarillo, Texas.

Her parents divorced after her alcoholic father gambled away the ranch that was their family home. Her dad often would fail to follow through on his word, she said, and from this she learned the importance of discipline and persistence.

"He had great visions and promises, but he never fulfilled anything," she said. "It's like the old saying goes, even a bad example is a good example."

As a means of "escape" during her childhood, Garcia would slip off to 10-cent June Allison movies and to the library.

"I loved to read, but my grandmother used to say, 'Put that book down. All you're going to wind up doing is changing diapers, anyway,'" Garcia said. "If my background had been different, I don't think I would be where I am today."



Rep. Edwina Garcia is leaving the House after four terms to seek the position of secretary of state.

Garcia and her husband, Joe, left New Mexico for Minnesota in the early 1970s.

"We only came with one pickup, my daughter, and a little dog," she said. "We just took off, the four of us, because we wanted to start fresh. But I tell you, if we hadn't come here, I don't think we would have had the opportunities or direction to follow."

At the age of 35, Garcia was the first person in her family or her husband's family to graduate from college. Their daughter, Jill, became the first in the family to obtain a master's degree.

Garcia was in the middle of her second term on the Richfield City Council when she mounted a successful run for the House in 1990.

The legislative district she represents is "landlocked" between the Minneapolis-St. Paul airport, several major freeways, and Edina, Garcia said. Before seeking the state office, she was frustrated by the lack of partnership between her local government and the Legislature.

"We have nowhere to grow but up," she said. "We've done very well in terms of redevelopment and building up our tax base."

Garcia regards the Metropolitan Airport Commission noise mitigation legislation she sponsored as her "sweetest victory" because it was a win for the people who live adjacent to the airport.

"It was just beautiful because [the commission] hadn't been defeated in years," she said. "I like to fight impossible battles and I like a challenge. It just keeps you going and gives you so much energy."

Garcia said she can feel her energy level increasing as she gears up for her secretary of state campaign.

"I've never lost a race, but if someone were to beat me, I would say, 'I wish you well. I wish you success. If there's anything I can do to help you in that office, I will,' and I would walk away free," she said. "Whatever happens, I'm OK with leaving." ❁

## Frequently called numbers

**Secretary of the Senate**  
 231 Capitol ..... 296-0271  
 Voice mail/order bills ..... 296-2343  
**Chief Clerk of the House**  
 211 Capitol ..... 296-2314

**Index, Senate**  
 110 Capitol ..... 296-2887  
**Index, House**  
 211 Capitol ..... 296-6646  
**Information, Senate**  
 231 Capitol ..... 296-0504

**Information, House**  
 175 State Office Building ..... 296-2146  
**TTY\*, Senate** ..... 296-0250  
 Toll free ..... 1-888-234-1112  
**TTY\*, House** ..... 296-9896  
 Toll free ..... 1-800-657-3550