

Rep. Bob Haukoos . . .

Albert Lea lawmaker retires 'practicing his preaching'



Rep. Bob Haukoos (R-Albert Lea) was ready to retire from the Legislature four years ago, but some of his constituents objected.

He tried again two years ago. Again, they asked him to stay.

"But this time, I announced before anyone could get to me," Haukoos said.

The 16-year veteran lawmaker, a long-time believer in term limits, has decided to practice what he has preached. He will not seek re-election in 1994, not that elections ever posed much of a problem for the popular Haukoos.

Despite representing an area with DFL leanings, Haukoos has routinely coasted to landslide victories.

"I've had very good luck, always getting more than 60 percent or better in my elections. I wasn't afraid of running again. But I thought it was time, after 16 years . . . to enjoy the private life."

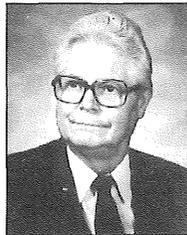
But there also are a few other reasons for his retirement.

"I plan on spending some time with my first three grandchildren," said Haukoos, who is 62. His son and daughter-in-law recently gave birth to triplets — two boys and a girl — and Haukoos intends to make many trips to visit them in California.

Haukoos, who is tied for third in seniority in the House IR Caucus, is considered a low-key lawmaker known for being frugal with state dollars and for paying close attention to his constituents in Freeborn County.

This session, for example, he strongly opposed a proposal to allow only video gambling in bars and restaurants and eliminate paper pulltabs because it could have caused job layoffs for a local Albert Lea company that produces paper pulltabs.

The retired Albert Lea firefighter and former



Rep. Bob Haukoos

Greatest accomplishment: Always putting his constituents first.

Haukoos says that representing the people of District 27A (District 31A before reapportionment in 1992) was the single greatest achievement of his 16-year legislative term. And it's no wonder his constituents didn't want him to retire. "Anytime anyone called, I really went to work for them. All of the things . . . anything they asked about . . . I looked into it," he said.

U.S. Navy man gained even more respect when he quietly refused to accept campaign contributions from special interest groups or PACs. His move preceded the Legislature's action to overhaul the state's campaign finance laws last year.

Deeming his position as a state representative "the most exciting, interesting, educational job that I've ever had," Haukoos is proud of what he's accomplished as a legislator.

He is particularly proud of a law he helped pass concerning airplane frequent flyer benefits. It states that the frequent-flyer miles accrued belong to the purchaser of the ticket, which, in some cases, is the state or other governmental unit.

His thrifty attitude was apparent in another piece of legislation that allows advertising information kiosks in the state's rest areas.

The state had planned to staff the rest areas with more employees, which Haukoos thought unnecessary. He sponsored a bill that allowed the state to take bids on installing the kiosks containing both information for travelers and advertising. The company would sell the ad space and the state would receive part of the revenue.

Since Haukoos was first elected in 1978, Independent-Republicans have controlled the House just once. But those two years marked

the highlight of Haukoos' legislative career. He chaired the appropriations committee that funded higher education.

"It was the most satisfying job I've had here," said Haukoos. "In fact, I was able to visit every college in the state. It was a tremendous education . . . I loved it."

Although Haukoos says the legislative pace seems faster than when he first arrived, many of the issues remain the same: environment, acid rain, unemployment, and workers' compensation.

And like many retiring lawmakers, Haukoos said he wished DFLers and IRs could work more closely at the Capitol. He has often thought it would be a good idea if every bill had to have a co-author from each party.

"If you couldn't talk one person from the other party to co-author the bill with you, then that bill didn't have much chance of going through anyway," he said.

In order to succeed as a lawmaker, Haukoos insists you have to be able to negotiate and compromise. Fellow legislators often come up with good ideas that make a bill even better than the original.

"If you're stubborn, you're going to be very lonely here."

—Mary Hayes

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