

Pounding away

After four years in the House, Jacobson looking forward to the next chapter in his life

By PATTY JANOVEC

After a long discussion and frank advice several years ago from a former representative, Rep. Carl Jacobson (R-Vadnais Heights) said he took to heart the suggestion, "When you reach the point when your heart really is not in it 100 percent it's probably time to start getting ready to move on."

Working on a 1953 Chevy truck is much more satisfying to him now than the long hours of being a legislator, so it's time to step down, he said. "I've found that pounding tin and spraying paint is a lot more enjoyable to me than pounding on doors and marching up and down the street." A hobby in the past, he says vehicle restoration could become a business in the future.

"I look at some of the other things I want to do in life, and some of the other goals I have in life, and they've become a little bigger priority," Jacobson said of his decision to not seek re-election.

Legislation he authored adding several provisions for charitable gambling in veterans' organizations is what he's most proud of. Jacobson felt it was the least he could do to honor his father, who passed away during his first session in office. "I thought why not do this as a memorial to him and to help save the VFWs and the (American) Legions because they are hurting financially and their numbers are dropping fairly rapidly." He said if the legislation helps someone else's dad have a couple more dinners with his friends at the VFW, then he's accomplished what he set out to do.

The most difficult aspect of being a lawmaker, he said, is when a constituent or friend calls hurting and in trouble, and "you know they are honestly making an effort to try and get out of their situation whatever it is," but there isn't a legislative solution. He said that is especially true when compared to those who he sees make no effort, and are "getting everything they need."

While tough times make the job relentless, Jacobson said what has made the experience worth it is, "building the relationships where two people can fight like cats and dogs on a



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

After two terms in the House, Rep. Carl Jacobson has decided to move on.

single issue, and five minutes later they are fighting together for something else."

Others may remember Jacobson as a member who would stay true to his word.

"The thing I like about Carl is he's always up front with you," said Rep. Tom Rukavina (DFL-Virginia). "In a place where people give you their word, and then sometimes they weasel out of it, he never did."

Joking between the two friends seems commonplace. That is understandable considering both grew up on the Iron Range. Rukavina laughingly said he jokes with Jacobson: "I saw your ma and dad up there and they love you even though they don't agree with your politics."

Jacobson served on the House State Government Finance, Government Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy, Taxes, and Health

and Human Services Policy committees during his four years in office.

"Taxes was just a natural," he said in reference to his background in public accounting. Committee Chair Rep. Ron Abrams (R-Minnetonka) ran an impressive committee, and Jacobson said he doesn't know if he'll ever have another opportunity to work with such a role model as Abrams.

Jacobson wishes more things could have been accomplished in his time at the Legislature. He said government has reached a point where it is very good at building bureaucracy and building systems that keep people in government working, but "I don't know that we're doing a great job at providing service."

Jacobson said the last few years have been difficult and frustrating when facing multi-billion dollar budget deficits, and doing "very little in the way of preparing for the future." An aging population looms, with many retirees coming to the forefront, and he believes lawmakers have not done a good job of preparing for those issues.

When elected in 2000, he said that his goals included holding the line on spending and "bringing sanity and intelligence to the budget process. We've done a great job in recent years...of making things incredibly complicated and complex and difficult to understand. We've done a very poor job of making things sensible."

While not closing the door completely on his career in politics, Jacobson said, "I've learned along the way here in four years that you just never say never." 🍀

STEPPING DOWN

Rep. Carl Jacobson
Republican
District 54B — Vadnais Heights
Terms: 2

Career Notes: An advocate for charitable gambling and veterans' issues, Jacobson carried the omnibus charitable gambling bill in 2003. The law allows for rent paid by organizations to be based on a percentage of gross profits and allows for licensed organizations to participate in electronically linked bingo games thereby providing for a single prize pool.