

Not enough time

Family and professional commitments play significant role in Lipman deciding not to seek a third term

By MIKE COOK

A math problem centered on time is causing Rep. Eric Lipman (R-Lake Elmo) to say good-bye to the House of Representatives.

In addition to being a husband and father of two young children, the two-term member has tried to effectively balance being a lawyer for Mohrman and Kaardal with being a lawmaker, serving on three House committees and two commissions.

"As rewarding as my legislative service has been, it is time for me to focus on just one job and the needs of my growing family," he said. "It's been very satisfying to be part of all the decision-making and to represent the concerns of my community here, but all the satisfactions are for the candidate and all the suffering and sacrifices are for my family."

Not running doesn't mean that Election Day will be a quiet time for Lipman, his wife Kimberly, 4-year-old daughter Jenna, and 18-month-old son Noah. A third child is expected on the day voters will go to the polls. "I think someone was trying to tell me a message," he said.

Calling it a tough choice, Lipman said he knew this would be his last term when the pregnancy test results were known. "I'm interested in public affairs, making a difference, and contributing to the process along the way. However, legislative service, if you take it seriously and try to be involved, is becoming nearly a full-time job."

Lipman says he is a person who does not want to short-change anything he does, something he fears could happen by stretching himself too thin. "Because I wasn't planning on being here forever anyways and certainly with the needs of helping my wife ... it's challenging, but I'm not sure there was another choice for me. The prescription I have in my own life is 'Do fewer things better.'"

Calling himself a "committee grunt," which he partially describes as being up to speed on bills before the committee and making refinements, Lipman serves on the House Civil Law, Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs Policy,



PHOTO BY LISA M. SANDERS

A self-described "committee grunt," Rep. Eric Lipman is leaving the House to focus on his expanding family and his law career.

and Judiciary Policy and Finance committees.

Some of the greatest pride Lipman says he has taken is ensuring that legislative intent is clear in any proposal. "The role I play in committee is that of the member draftsman. In my private life as a practicing lawyer we struggle a lot with what did the Legislature intend when it selected these words and not other words. It's important for (legislators) to spend some time and resources on getting the words right."

Lipman smiled while recalling a time when someone from the Office of the Revisor of Statutes told him that they wanted a bill introduced to clean up some language in state statutes and he was the first legislator that they considered.

"I point to that with pride that they would think of me," he said. "Maybe I'm wrong for the place if I'm not thinking about the bill that

will get me on the front of the newspaper, but I took satisfaction in it."


Others noticed Lipman's skills in both draftsmanship and vocalizing his thoughts.

"Regardless of what the issue is he can articulate so well, he can make reference to present statute, its implication on the future, and its negatives and positives in regard to how it affects the common good," said Rep. Sondra Erickson (R-Princeton). "He has drama in his delivery, a vocabulary that is specific and not filled with legalese, and he's so polite."

"He's a very personable man, he's a smart man, he's got a good sense of humor, an affable guy," said Rep. Keith Ellison (DFL-Mpls), whose bill to reduce drug sentencing Lipman signed on as the first co-author. "I like working with him. When you're at odds with him he is a formidable opponent. He and I disagreed probably more often than we agreed, but I never walked away from a disagreement with him feeling disrespected or abused."

Before this session concludes, Lipman says he hopes a handful of proposals he has worked on will be approved: completion of a Bayport sewer system, authorization of a Lake Elmo comprehensive plan, and election changes to help Minnesota comply with federal requirements as part of the Help America Vote Act. "I think it's a great vote of confidence of the secretary of state and my colleagues that something that is intimately tied to their fortune was left to my care," he said.

Will Eric Lipman ever run for office again, maybe when his children are older?

"I'd like to be on the ballot someday," he said. "I certainly care deeply about public service. I certainly enjoy the opportunity to try and contribute." 

STEPPING DOWN

Rep. Eric Lipman

Republican

District 56A – Lake Elmo

Terms: 2

Career Notes: In addition to being concerned with legislative intent during his four years in the Minnesota House, Lipman has been a consistent proponent for election reform to ensure uniformity and fairness.

Session Weekly