

Signs point to family, school for eight-year veteran



If Rep. Teresa Lynch (R-An-dover) was concerned about power, now would not be the time to leave the Minnesota House of Representatives.

As a Republican, her political party is within reach of taking control of the House and she, with eight years in office, is the second-ranking Republican woman.

"The timing couldn't have been worse for the party," Lynch said.

She said she ultimately had to decide what was best for herself. The 42-year-old mother of four and grandmother of one is back in school at Metropolitan State University working on her bachelor's degree in communications.

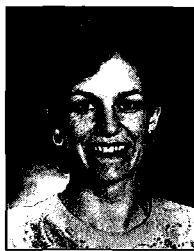
Now is the time to leave. Lynch, a sign language interpreter, said she's young enough to finish her degree and still establish herself in a career.

"[The Legislature] to me was never a career," she said. Raising her four daughters with her husband, David, however, has been a career.

Lynch said it took months for her to make the decision to leave. Although she is a strong proponent of term limits, she said that position had little to do with her decision to retire. It was all about personal growth and doing something for herself. "The [Republican] party was wonderful. Lucky for me they didn't pressure me too much," she said.

But the lawmaker did receive pressure from an unexpected source, her nine-year-old daughter, Tessa.

Tessa was two when her mother took office



Rep. Teresa Lynch

Noted achievements: Lynch's most noted legislative accomplishments include landmark legislation that requires teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing to demonstrate at least a minimal skill level in American Sign Language; the 1994 passage of a landfill bill she helped sponsor which established a trust fund to clean up contaminated landfills; and a 1992 parental empowerment law which gave parents more say about their children's school materials.

in 1988. She grew up with the Legislature and is distraught that her mother is leaving. Recently, she couldn't bear to enter her mother's office in the State Office Building because she knew it would be one of the last times she could.

"I never realized how much this job has become a part of her identity," Lynch said.

Lynch's stint in the Legislature spawned a variety of successful bills that cut government red tape, gave parents more power, improved schools and health care, and helped clean up contaminated landfills.

Among them include a law requiring teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing to demonstrate at least a minimal skill level in American Sign Language. For this, she won a national award from the National Association of the Deaf, the nation's oldest deaf consumer advocacy group.

Another was designed to give parents more control over what their children learn in school. It gives parents the authority to review class materials, and if they find something objectionable, to make arrangements

for alternative instruction.

Still another found a way around all the mess regarding who pays for the cleanup of a contaminated landfill. Under the old system, the burden for cleaning up a landfill was usually shouldered by a select group of businesses and local governments the state or federal government identified as responsible for contaminating the landfill.

Although not the chief sponsor, Lynch was instrumental in helping pass a new law that established a state-sponsored landfill cleanup program. The law tries to end the numerous court fights between and among Minnesota businesses and municipalities over who should pay to clean up landfills and in what amounts. Under the law, the state generates money to pay for the program by raising the fee businesses and local governments pay on the garbage they generate, whether it goes to a landfill, incinerator, or composing plant. It's called the solid waste generator fee.

— K. Darcy Hanzlik

Frequently called numbers

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231 Capitol	296-2344
Voice mail/order bills	296-2343
Chief Clerk of the House	
211 Capitol	296-2314
Index, Senate	
110 Capitol	296-5250
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211 Capitol	296-6646
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Information, House	
175 State Office Building	296-2146

Committee Hotline, Senate	296-8088
Committee Hotline, House	296-9283
Sergeant at Arms, Senate	
Senate Chamber	296-7159
Sergeant at Arms, House	
45 State Office Building	296-4860
Counsel and Research, Senate	
G-17 Capitol	296-4791
Research, House	
600 State Office Building	296-6753
Legislative Reference Library	
645 State Office Building	296-3398
Revisor of Statutes	
700 State Office Building	296-2868

Governor's Office	
130 Capitol	296-3391
Attorney General's Office	
102 Capitol	296-6196
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180 State Office Building	296-2803
Capitol Security	
B-4 Capitol	296-6741
Emergency	296-2100
TDD*, Senate	296-0250
TDD*, House	296-9896
or 1-800-657-3550	

*Telecommunications Device for the Deaf