

Miller: Career politics aren't his style

Rep. Howard Miller (IR-Redwood Falls) has one simple reason for retiring from the House.

"I don't believe in career politicians and I don't want to wake up one morning and look in the mirror and find one," says the Independent-Republican from Redwood Falls.

His decision not to run, announced on the House floor April 9 by a colleague, surprised many, but is one Miller made nearly six months ago, he says.

It came with mixed emotions.

"I'll miss parts of this place very deeply," he says. "There's an intellectual stimulation that occurs here that I don't think other places have."

And then there's the camaraderie.

"You become 'buddies' in the sense that you've experienced the same things — the pressure from constituents, the pressure from your colleagues, the pressure from your beliefs," he says.

But there was also frustration that people aren't more active and interested in government, and that the system makes it tough for people to feel they have an impact.

"I'd like to see people take back government," he says. "It's theirs. They don't get involved yet complain about the decisions made. Someone needs to start a little fire under everyone out there."

Miller, first elected in 1984, serves on the Appropriations, Judiciary, and Economic Development Committees. He has worked to develop a strong founda-



Rep. Howard Miller

tion for the IR caucus and is currently trying to get the IR party to accept a set of "fundamental principles" to serve as a philosophical foundation for the party.

Its preamble hints at Miller's conservatism.

"America's future greatness, as with its past, rests not with government, individual leaders, or military strength, but with the recognition and preservation of those fundamental values and beliefs upon which our country was formed and serve as our foundation of freedom."

"There are a lot of tough issues here; a lot of times it's hard to decide what's right or wrong, but if we have some fundamental beliefs, then we'll have the foundation we need to build on," Miller said.

When Miller leaves the House, he will be joining Schwan's Sales Enterprises, an international, diverse food company with its Minnesota headquarters in Marshall. Miller will be working in government and industry relations.

He hopes his colleagues remember him as a man who "spoke his mind and voted his convictions," Miller says. "I've tried to ask the body to think more thoughtfully and deeply about the issues and the direction we're heading; let's not look so much at the best political reaction of the moment but further down the road to what's best for everyone."

He says he authored few bills during his tenure in the House. Rather, as a member of the Appropriations Committee, he helped decide the merits of other lawmakers' proposals.

As for his colleagues, they would do well to remember that, while they are accountable to their constituents, their party, and their state, in the end they are accountable to themselves.

"If they're able to walk away from here with their colleagues saying they were more wise than clever, more courageous than political, then they have served this institution well."

It's not poetry, but it's easier to read

make anything but formal changes without legislative approval.

"You can be sure that it's [punctuation] wrong, but you can't be sure that it's right," he says, adding that a comma can change meaning.

That's just one of the three types of revisor's bills the Legislature considered this year. A second one, which also has been approved and signed into law, deals primarily with errant references in statute, explains Walsh.

For example, when a new section of law is created and the old section is deleted, the references to the old law in other statutes often aren't discovered

until later. And that's why those changes need to be made, says Walsh.

Those two types of revisor's bills are pretty straightforward, but the third type — which Walsh says could be more accurately described as a corrections bill — can be a bit controversial.

That's the bill that is typically fashioned in the last days of a session to correct mistakes found in recently passed bills that are hastily put together before the Legislature adjourns.

"It's hard to draft a 300-page bill without making some mistakes," says Walsh.

Although no substantive changes in

meaning are supposed to be contained in the bills, sometimes there are attempts to slip in a few meatier clauses.

Sen. John Marty (DFL-Roseville) recalled the time a few years ago when the revisor's bill he authored contained a change pertaining to horse racing that was perceived to be substantive.

The bill was voted down, and Marty says some of his colleagues were upset that the change was slipped into the bill.

"We haven't had another crash and burn, but we will," says Walsh. "It's in the nature of the process."