

Rep. Sidney Pauly . . .

# Gardener, poet leaves imprint on environment



Rep. Sidney Pauly (IR-Eden Prairie) is somewhat of an anomaly among fellow House members.

"The truth of the matter is, the last five elections I haven't had an opponent. I only had an opponent the first time I ran. I know I'm singularly lucky," Pauly said.

Not only that, but her first legislative bid was for a newly created district. So, she didn't face an incumbent.

But come November, Pauly's name — contested or not — won't be on the ballot. She's not running for a seventh term. The 60-year-old lawmaker and homemaker wrote and distributed a poem earlier this year to formally announce her retirement.

*Next year, colleagues, I'll bid you all adieu.  
Someone else will show up from District 42.*

*A golf course calls, the sailboat needs me,*

*My garden summons,  
Grandchildren heed me.*

*Nineteen years of elected service,  
The call of duty and public purpose;  
This has been my daily life  
(And I did it without a wife.)*

*But I will miss you all; I'll shed a tear  
Come '95, when I'm out of here!*

"I felt after 12 years I was ready to do something new. I thought I would run three terms and that would be it. I'm surprised I've been here this long," said Pauly, who favors term limits but said her position on the issue has nothing to do with her stepping down.

She and her husband, Roger, plan to spend every January basking under a warm sun, possibly in Mexico, from now on. But, she said, she'll never move from Minnesota.

"Minnesota is a lot more endearing if you can leave in January," she added.



**Greatest accomplishment:** Working for environmental reform.

"Our caucus is perceived as environmentally unaware," said Pauly, an avid gardener known for sprucing up some offices with her wild flowers. "I think I'm a living example that that's not true."

In the mid-1980s, Pauly successfully co-authored a bill to keep batteries from the waste stream. Last year, she co-sponsored a bill favoring a treaty compromise between the state and the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Indians.

Pauly came to the Legislature in 1982, a year after legislative redistricting. But she was by no means a political novice when she arrived. Pauly had served three terms on the Eden Prairie City Council, though she had taken a two-year break before her legislative bid. She had always wanted a say in state government.

Her first year as a legislator mirrored her first year of college, she said. She had a hard time finding her way around, learning the names and faces of her fellow lawmakers, and understanding just how the system worked.

"I think I'd have been surprised then to know how comfortable and at home I'd feel here now. It isn't that difficult to learn the system," she said.

And her city council experience didn't hurt. "I knew how to speak to fellow politicians. Being in a room full of people who want you to vote one way and then you vote the other — I already knew how that felt," she said.

If she hadn't already known that feeling, she would have had plenty of time to learn during last year's attempted fishing treaty compromise between the state and the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Indians. Some district members had asked her to oppose any settlement regarding Mille Lacs Lake.

"But most people said, 'Do what you think

is right,'" Pauly said. She co-sponsored the bill that would have led to a treaty agreement with the band. The bill was not approved and now the issue will be decided in federal court.

That, of course, wasn't her only brush with controversial topics at the Capitol. Pauly is an original member of the House Ethics Committee, which passes judgment on the conduct of fellow House members, and successfully helped kill a bill that would have allowed a garbage-hauling company to expand the Flying Cloud landfill in Eden Prairie despite serious neighborhood opposition.

During that debate, Pauly, known throughout the Capitol for placing wild flowers on people's desks, called lobbyists for the garbage-hauling company a "bunch of thugs."

Pauly says she came to the Capitol with a pretty realistic attitude about what would happen. She knew she wasn't going to make any great changes in state government, she said, but then she never promised constituents she would. She promised to do her best. And she's upheld that promise.

—Jean M. Thilmany