

Rep. Leo Reding . . .

# 'Living Technicolor legislator' announces retirement



Retiring is something that Rep. Leo Reding has gotten good at.

He has retired twice already — once in 1982 from the House and again in 1985 from his job as a meat cutter at the Hormel plant in his native Austin.

Now, the 69-year-old legislator from District 27B in rural southeastern Minnesota has announced his second retirement from the House. This legislative session will be his last. Really. He means it.

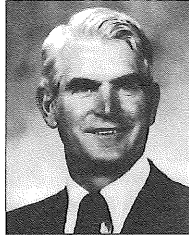
Reding first came to the House in 1975, but left after four terms because of the stress of numerous special sessions. He returned to the House in 1987 after his successor, Pat Piper, was elected to the Minnesota Senate.

He was first elected at a time when Greater Minnesota members still had a slight edge in power over their metropolitan colleagues. Since then, Reding has seen rural members' clout gradually decline.

Now, he said, it's time for a younger — perhaps more aggressive — member to take control and strongly argue for the interests of Greater Minnesota.

In addition, after working as a public servant for more than 16 years and always answering to the concerns of his constituents, Reding said it's time for him to spend more time on his 69-acre wooded farm that he and his wife, Marian, have outside Austin.

"My goal is to see how many birds and animals I can attract to that," he said.



Rep. Leo Reding

**Greatest accomplishment:** Bringing the majority of the state's police and firefighter associations into the Public Employees Retirement Association.

Reding, who has chaired the Legislative Commission on Pensions and Retirement, said that prior to the efforts he and others made in this area, many police and fire retirement accounts were underfunded and could easily have become a tremendous burden to taxpayers.

The consummate nature lover, Reding has been involved with much legislation designed to protect the Minnesota outdoors. This session, for example, Reding is carrying a bill to preserve a Native American flint quarry and a bill to establish two nature trails.

But he quickly added that he will miss the House of Representatives.

"I've had some really unique years here," Reding said. Indeed, the DFL lawmaker said those years included witnessing two of the most unusual developments in Minnesota politics.

Those two events, Reding said, are the 1978 elections that left the House deadlocked with 67 representatives from each party, and the 1990 election of Gov. Arne Carlson, who didn't win his party's primary election.

"There's just a lot of awfully good memories," Reding said, making it impossible to select one as his favorite. But high on his list are the heated public battles he had with

other representatives only to later effectively work with them on other legislation.

Reding said he has survived in the House by learning the fine art of building alliances and gathering the votes he needs to pass bills. In fact, that wisdom is encapsulated in the advice he would give to the person who replaces him next year: "You can't do anything up here without 68 votes."

Reding's unique style of dress has also given him another reputation around the Capitol. The sports jackets he wears are often in shades of purple, green, or orange. His pastel attire once led a Twin Cities weekly newspaper to dub him the "living Technicolor legislator."

Reding takes all such kidding in stride, because he knows that he has served his constituents in southeastern Minnesota well. "I have helped a lot of people," he said. "And that's kind of neat."

— Tim Walker