

NEWS OBITUARIES

# Ex-Sen. Dallas Sams, 'champion of agriculture'

● The 16-year state Senate veteran and DFLer from Staples died after a two-year battle with brain cancer.

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Former state Sen. Dallas Sams, who battled brain cancer through a losing reelection campaign last year, died Monday at St. Joseph's Hospital in St. Paul. He was 54.



The death of the DFLer Sams from Staples, in north-central Minnesota, was announced on the Senate floor, where members observed a moment of silence.

Senate Majority Leader Larry Pogemiller, DFL-Minneapolis, said that pending

legislation Sams championed to earmark a portion of Minnesota's sales tax for funding outdoors programs will be dedicated to his memory.

"His friendship, humor, insight and compassion will be greatly missed by us all," Pogemiller said.

Praise came from Republicans as well.

"He was a consummate legislator, able to work both sides of the aisle," said Senate Minority Leader David Senjem, R-Rochester. "He was someone who put policy ahead of politics. We'll miss him a lot."

Sams' 16 years in the Senate ended with his loss to Republican Bill Ingebriksen last

November. Sams' illness and treatment hampered his ability to campaign, and Senjem said he thinks Sams probably would have been reelected had he been healthy.

A dairy farmer, agriculture management teacher, airplane pilot and motorcycle enthusiast, Sams concentrated on rural issues as a senator. According to Politics in Minnesota, he pushed through legislation aimed at attracting young people to farming and helping rural hospitals stay in business.

"Minnesota lost a true champion of the outdoors, agriculture and veterans today," Gov. Tim Pawlenty said in a news release. "Senator Sams was loved by everyone around the Capitol for his caring nature, good humor and common sense."

Sen. Dick Day, R-Owatonna, who often drove Sams to treatment sessions at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, called him "my best friend as a Democrat." Sen. Rod Skoe, DFL-Clearbrook, said that Sams "carried a lot of controversial issues, but he could disagree without being disagreeable. He was fun to be around."

Sams is survived by his wife, Mary Beth Davidson; his children, Seth, Stacia, Jordan, Mitchell and Michael; his mother, and three brothers.

Visitation will be 4 to 8 p.m. Friday and the funeral at 11 a.m. Saturday, both at the Staples High School gymnasium.

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