

Rep. Brad Stanius . . .

'Angling legislator' to fish in a different pond



Rep. Brad Stanius (IR-White Bear Lake) is a behind-the-scenes lawmaker, whose approach is both pragmatic and calculated.

He'll often push through his proposals as amendments to other bills rather than sponsoring them himself.

"He's feisty, very directed, and knows what he wants to accomplish," said Rep. Dennis Ozment (IR-Rosemount). He met Stanius as a fellow freshman legislator nearly 10 years ago.

"He's a highly qualified leader, and he has shown that leadership in the caucus," Ozment added. Stanius was an assistant minority leader and floor whip for six years.

But after serving nearly a decade in the House, Stanius recently announced he will not seek re-election for a sixth term.

He looks forward to more time with his family and more time for his beloved fishing and hunting.

Even at the Capitol, though, Stanius' love of the outdoors was evident. So much so that he's been called the "angling legislator."

"I think I have accomplished what I can in the minority," he said. "I have opportunities out of the Legislature and it will feel good to get back in the private sector."

Stanius will return to his position as vice president of Smarte Carte, a White Bear Lake company that manufactures, distributes, and rents carts and lockers at airports, bus stations, and train depots worldwide.

Stanius doesn't shy away from controversy, which was evident during debate over the proposed hunting and fishing rights settlement with the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Indians last year. He passionately led the



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Greatest accomplishment: Working for his constituents throughout the years has brought Stanius the most enjoyment.

About five years ago, Stanius helped a little girl receive a kidney transplant by convincing the family's insurance company to pay for the expenses. The company had balked at paying the costs, calling the procedure "experimental," he said.

"Really, the reason I'm here — it sounds kind of hokey — is the good feeling I get when I know I have done the right thing and made a difference."

opposition to the proposal that was meant to resolve disputes surrounding 19th century treaties between the Ojibwe and the U.S. government.

The controversy will soon be tried in federal court.

Although the Mille Lacs issue is among Stanius' more prominent moments in the House, he said he doesn't consider it among the most important. What's mattered more to him were the economic development projects and other legislation he helped pass for White Bear Lake constituents.

This year, for example, Stanius sponsored a bill that says telephone customers won't have to pay for calls to 1-900 services if they were made by minors without permission. The measure also applies to adults who are mentally ill or mentally retarded.

That bill, already signed into law, resulted from an extremely high phone bill one of his constituents received.

"He takes a stand on what he believes in and what he thinks is correct and that can cause apprehension — even among his own caucus," Ozment said.

Stanius ran for minority leader twice — in 1990 and 1992 — but narrowly lost both bids.

"The last time caused him to step back and re-evaluate his life and I think we're seeing the results of that now," Ozment said.

Stanius conceded that the race, which had included personal attacks, helped him decide to step down.

Since Stanius first arrived in 1985, special interests have gained more control over the legislative process, he said.

"Special interests know how to get [legislators] elected and they speak the language of the Legislature, which is re-election," Stanius said.

He's been in the minority for all but two of his 10 years.

Although he was able to get more legislation passed when Independent-Republicans controlled the House, keeping tabs on the Democrats isn't all bad.

"That's sometimes lots of fun," he said wryly.

—Julie Houlton