

# Five-term lawmaker seeks control over his own destiny

Grant Martin

Stepping  
Down

Seeking one of the most high-profile elected positions in the state with hopes of having more time to spend with your children seems to go against common sense.

But Rep. Charlie Weaver (R-Anoka) said in a recent interview that his children are one of the main reasons he is running for state attorney general.

"One of the reasons I'm leaving the House is that this is critical time in their lives," Weaver said. "The attorney general's office will allow me to be there."

Weaver said that unlike the governor and legislators who have to deal with the constant political battle, the attorney general's work is much less partisan.

"It's not an easier job," Weaver said. "I'll just have more control over my own destiny. I'm really looking forward to spending more time with my kids."

Weaver said that his experiences as a prosecuting attorney for Anoka County make his pursuit a logical one. He has worked for the county since 1991.

Weaver also has a good deal of experience when it comes to political battles. Elected in 1988, he rose rapidly to a leadership role within the Republican caucus. He is currently an assistant minority leader and Republican floor leader, and he frequently takes the point position for the Republicans in floor debate.

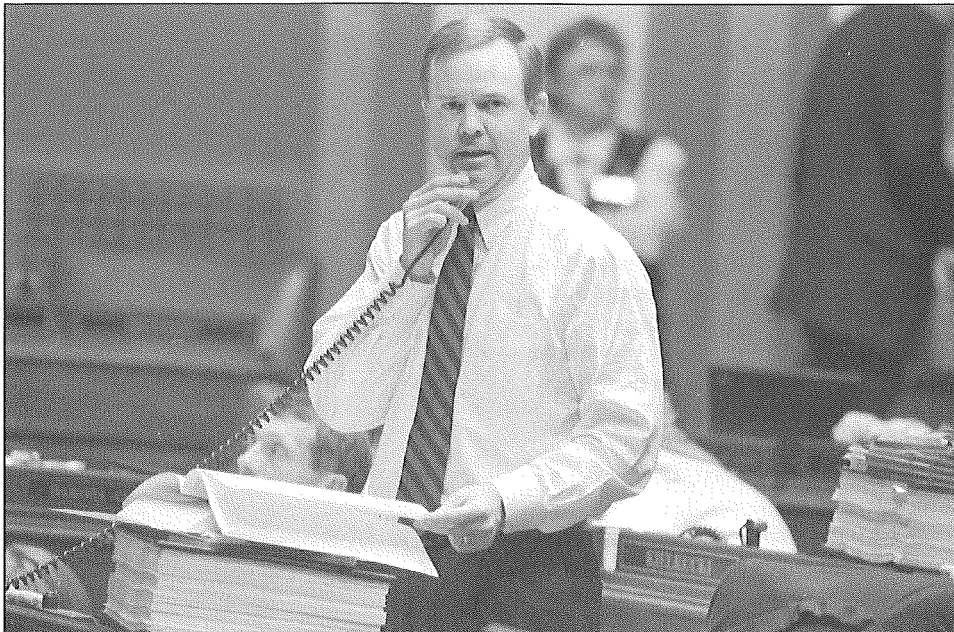
Weaver joked that his inspiration to run for a seat in the Legislature stems from a "genetic defect."

Weaver's family has had a long history in state politics. Weaver's House seat was held by his father, Charles Weaver, from 1967 to 1974 and by his uncle John Weaver from 1979 to 1982.

"Growing up, it wasn't my ambition to be a state representative," Weaver said. "I didn't grow up with that as my goal. It just worked out that way."

Whether it was nature or nurture, Weaver eventually got involved in politics. He said looking back now it's obvious to him that his father was the inspiration to go into public life.

"My father was my hero," Weaver said. "And I learned the importance of giving back to the community from him."



Rep. Charlie Weaver, a second-generation House member, will not seek re-election this fall. He is a candidate for attorney general.

Weaver said that he is very proud of his work in the Legislature regarding school safety. He was the chief author of the 1993 Safe Schools Act, which sought to give teachers and administrators the power to keep the state's schools safe from violence.

He also is pleased with his lesser-known legislative work.

"I am very proud of the little things," Weaver said. "The genetic discrimination act that we passed two years ago and the bone marrow donor legislation, for example. These things have been really important to me."

Weaver said that he learned a good deal about strategy from House members on both sides of the aisle. He said that his role models were former Reps. Brad Stanius, Paul Ogren, and Gil Gutknecht.

"The thing that all three of these guys had in common was they could be tough, strong partisans without being personal," he said. "They could disagree without being disagreeable."

Weaver said that the members of the Legislature can learn from that attitude. He said that he is worried that members are losing the ability to both debate ideas and maintain friendships.

"The thing that legislators need to avoid, and it's getting harder and harder to do it, is

taking themselves too seriously," Weaver said. "We tend to come down here and get caught up in the business, and that's important. But my biggest disappointment in the last 10 years is the decline in the personal relationships between members."

Weaver said that such relationships are important to the institution.

"When I first arrived here there were lots of opportunities to talk to other members and get to know them in social settings," he said. "Frankly, that's declined and I think it's bad for the system that we don't spend much time together — Republicans and Democrats — outside of here."

He also thinks that partisanship has become a serious problem for the Legislature, especially for the image of the institution.

"It's not good especially now that we're on camera," Weaver said. "The worst thing we could do is cause people to lose respect for the institution. We don't lose respect by disagreeing on issues. We lose it by being overtly partisan."

Weaver said that he will miss members from both sides of the aisle, but he is excited about his future plans.

"It's going to be fun," he said. "If I don't win, I'll just go back to prosecuting bad guys."

