

Reformer at heart

Brod walking away from the Legislature, but will keep putting out new ideas

By **PATTY OSTBERG**

Rep. Laura Brod's (R-New Prague) stepping down speech in the last hours of session wasn't a tearful goodbye, but more of a light-hearted "See ya' around." While Brod hasn't said specifically what her future plans entail, it's clear she'll still be working on government issues.

"I keep telling people I came into the Legislature to make a difference, but I'm leaving the Legislature to make a difference," she said. "I'm not retiring. I'm just not running for my seat again."

The time has come for her to reposition her career and move in a different direction, she said. "I'll be planning to stay involved in public policy. I'm planning on being involved on a variety of levels."

During her eight years in the House, she wouldn't back away from heated debate on controversial legislation. She calls herself a reformer at heart. "I've put new ideas on the table. I've tried to find ways to do things differently. I've asked the question, 'Why?' Why do we do what we do in government? Could we do it better? I think asking the question and looking at things from a different lens is something I've added to the process."

She's walking away from being an elected official with a real sense of challenge and hope. Too often the Legislature looks at things with the lens of "this is what we do and this is how we do it," she said. "I think that need to

reform has become crystal clear to me, and the path to reform is just that there's way too many people tied into the status quo and we've gotta start breaking down those doors."

Government as a whole needs a fundamental change on how it operates, she said. "I think the time is absolutely right for the Legislature on a bipartisan basis to move forward with some strong and meaningful reform."

The Republican lead on the House Taxes Committee, Brod says substantive, issue-based, policy reforms, like the state's tax code, need an overhaul. "We have a tax code that is based on the economy of the past and we need a tax code that's based on the economy of the future. ...



PHOTO BY KRISTIN SCHUE

Rep. Laura Brod plans to stay involved in public policy, but not as a member of the House.

There is not a need to nibble around the edges, there is a need to fundamentally restructure."

Health care is another reform issue where she still sees work needing to be done. Brod served on both the health policy and finance committees this year.

"We focus so much on who pays, but we don't really look at how we can deliver health care in a different way," she said, adding that the country and state's overall demographic trends are going to drive the need to focus spending and force government to do things differently.

Too often the legislative process focuses "in two-year snippets of time that align with the budget cycle or election cycle, and we need to think bigger than that," she said. "Ideas matter a lot, but beyond ideas, results matter too."

One of the biggest changes she's noticed since first being elected in 2002 is the "sense of a means to an end — that it's OK to do 'X' if it means we get 'Y.'"

"Rules matter; and they matter because they protect the minority," Brod said. "We need to make sure that we're always keeping the rules and the process such that it protects the voices of the people who are not necessarily wielding the gavel."

Overall, Brod has enjoyed her time as a legislator whether it was agreeing or disagreeing with people. "It has been a remarkable privilege for me and I don't regret one moment of it. And I look forward to continuing to be involved in public policy and I keep telling everybody, I'm not gone for good." 🌸

STEPPING DOWN

Rep. Laura Brod
Republican
District 25A - New Prague
Terms: 4 (elected 2002)
Advice to successor: "Don't assume you know. Ask lots of questions and don't accept 'because' as an answer."