

Focus on family time

Finstad leaving to concentrate on his children

By CRAIG GREEN

When Rep. Brad Finstad (R-Comfrey) first ran for office in 2002, he did so in part because of encouragement from family and friends. He went through a pair of shoes knocking on doors in his district, got to know his constituents, and got elected.

Now, six years later, wanting to spend more time with the same family and friends, Finstad is stepping down.

When Finstad began he was the youngest male legislator in the House at age 26. The son of a farmer, he and his wife, Jaclyn, were expecting their first child. Now they have three children — Greta, Thomas and Jake — with one more on the way.

“Time for me to be a better dad,” Finstad said. “My wife is a superstar, but I’m two-and-a-half hours away. ... At some point you have to say: Am I going to be OK at a bunch of

things, or am I going to be good at a few?”

With previous experience working as an agricultural advisor to former U.S. Rep. Mark Kennedy, Finstad currently serves as an assistant minority leader and the lead Republican on the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veteran Affairs Finance Division. His other committees include the House Finance Committee, the House Health and Human Services Committee, the House Licensing Subcommittee and the House Rules and Legislative Administration Committee.

Though he sponsored the bill that helped

pave the way for the new Minnesota Twins ballpark, Finstad said that he is most proud of sponsoring the “Positive Alternatives Act,” which was signed into law in 2005. It provides a funding stream for birthing centers to help women and families carry their babies to full-term, he said.

Finstad said he knew there were women who were pregnant and in crisis, but they had nowhere to go. They would ask, “How can we get help?”

Never a legislator in search of headlines, Finstad is content working behind the scenes, taking care of the small things that need to be done. “I don’t need the big bills to go home and show everyone what I’ve done,” he said.

The first bill he sponsored in the House, which was also signed into law, was a mostly technical bill, allowing farms to pool their resources when selecting health plans. “I’ve just tried to put my head down, roll up my sleeves, and work.”

Looking back on his time at the House, Finstad believes that there has become a more partisan tone to how things are done. This, he said, has led to more short-sighted legislation. Instead of solutions, the focus has become power. “What do we need to do to pick up seats in the next election? Or save seats?”

We’ve reached the point where “we’ve dehumanized each other,” as opposed to seeing each other as people and agreeing to disagree, he said. For whatever reason, Finstad said, too many legislators are focused on going after those in the opposite party, and not spending enough time addressing the issues in front of us.

Asked what advice he would have for the person who will occupy his position once he’s gone, Finstad said: “Work hard. Use your two ears more than you use your one mouth. Stay true to yourself; true to your district.”



PHOTO BY SARAH STACKE

Rep. Brad Finstad holds his daughter, Greta, as she enjoys a sucker and the computer at his desk in the House Chamber.

STEPPING DOWN

Rep. Brad Finstad
Republican
District: 21B — Comfrey
Terms: 3 (elected 2002)
Advice to successor: “Work hard. Use your two ears more than you use your one mouth. Stay true to yourself; true to your district.”