

# Back to basics

## Samuelson steps down to focus on career, family

**Editor's Note: As the 2006 session winds down, several members have announced their intentions to leave the Minnesota House of Representatives for new adventures. They leave a legacy of service that will remain part of legislative history.**

By Nick Busse

By the time she was first elected in 2002, Rep. Char Samuelson (R-New Brighton) had built a successful career for herself as a health care consultant. Now, after serving two terms in the House, Samuelson said she'd like to go back to work.

"My background is long-term health care, and I work for a consulting company, and I just really have a desire to get back into the health care field," she said, adding that she would also like the opportunity to spend more time with her family, especially her grandchildren.

Samuelson, a registered nurse and licensed nursing home administrator, said she has spent much of her time at the Legislature trying to address health care-related issues, especially in relation to senior citizens and children. She has worked extensively on nursing home-related issues and early family childhood education programs.

Among her biggest accomplishments, Samuelson was successful getting legislation passed in 2005 that requires all children under the age of 10 to wear life jackets aboard boats and other personal watercraft.

The law, known as the Grant Allen Law, was named after a 5-year-old boy who drowned after falling off of a boat into a Chisago County lake in 2003. She said that the boy's grandfather lived in her district.

Samuelson has served on the House Health Policy and Finance Committee and its Health Care Cost Containment Division, the House Local Government Committee and the House Rules and Legislative Administration Committee, of which she is currently vice-chair.

Prior to being elected state representative, she served on the New Brighton City Council for nine years. Her time serving in a state office has held many surprises, Samuelson said. She was struck first and foremost by the degree to which paid lobbyists and lobbying firms are involved in the legislative process.

"I don't know if that's a good thing or not.



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

**Rep. Char Samuelson is leaving the House after two terms to get back into the health care field.**

But I do know that the lobbyists are very knowledgeable of their clients' wishes or desires, and so it seems from that standpoint to be a good education piece on various bills," she said.

Also, she hadn't expected how accessible the governor is to legislators. "I think that's really important when you have things you need to discuss with him," she said.


In addition, Samuelson said she has enjoyed learning about the issues that come up in committee meetings and in debates on legislation — even small things, such as what a "feedlot" is.

"Chicken-houses," she explained. "I thought it was some kind of brand of food for animals."

Samuelson said she is leaving a Legislature that is more evenly divided than when she took office, and that makes it more difficult to pass legislation.

"The first two years, if you had a difference of opinion in the caucus, you might have been able to get by," she said. "The last two years, it's just been real tight. There's been a lot more discussion and a lot more reviewing things, so that people understand what they need to, to get those passed."

Samuelson said she has always tried to represent the people of her district as best she could, even when it meant taking an unpopular stance on a particular bill or issue.

"It's been a really good, really rewarding experience, and I hope that I have done something good to impact the state of Minnesota for the future." 

### STEPPING DOWN

**Rep. Char Samuelson  
Republican**

**District 50B — New Brighton**

**Terms: Two (elected 2002)**

**Advice to successor: "I think continuing to keep up community contact and remembering that we're here to serve the people from our district is probably the biggest thing. Because those are the people that send us down here, those are the people that we have to be accountable to."**