

A family man heads home

Shifting priorities cause for Hosch to step down

By Nick Busse

Mondays are a bittersweet affair for Rep. Larry Hosch (DFL-St. Joseph). The excitement he feels at the start of another week at the Capitol is tempered by the heart-wrenching ritual — familiar to many rural lawmakers — of saying goodbye to his family.

“I’ve got a 4-and-a-half-year-old and a 16-month-old at home, and I miss them,” Hosch said.

This year, the ritual became too much to bear. His children are getting old enough to ask questions about why daddy’s not home

more often, and the weight of their questions is crushing. After one particularly tearful goodbye at the start of this year’s legislative session, Hosch decided it was time to step down and focus on his family.

“It’s not for a lack of passion or a lack of love for the job,” Hosch says. “I still want to fight the fight; I just have to fight it in a different way.”

Hosch was just 27 when he first arrived at the Capitol, having already served four years as mayor in his hometown of St. Joseph. He’s spent most of his adult life in

public office, during which time he also completed a master’s degree, married his wife Holly, had two children (Garrett and Gavin) and co-owned a construction business.

In short, it has been a busy life. In spite of this, Hosch said he’s loved serving in the Legislature.

“I believe in what happens down here. I believe in good public policy,” he said.

Of all the bills he’s sponsored, Hosch said the one he’s most proud of allowed for extended orders of protection for people in abusive relationships.

Although it was a “smaller bill” that didn’t get much attention, he said it involved one of this favorite parts of the job — constituent work.

“That came out

of a direct constituent issue, in which a constituent was dealing with trying to serve their ex with a fourth order for protection, and I’ve come into contact with a lot of people who have been impacted by that bill,” Hosch said.

Hosch thinks the nitty-gritty of solving constituents’ problems is some of the most important work legislators do. He said he’s proud to represent one of the most conservative districts of any DFL House member, and attributes his success to the work that he and his staff have done directly addressing the concrete needs of the people in his district.

“That is where you can see a difference being made, where somebody calls you up with a problem or a frustration, needing help, whether it be navigating government or getting an answer on an issue,” he said.

Asked about advice to his successor, Hosch has plenty: work hard for your district; always be open to others’ ideas; and don’t stake out a final position on an issue until you’re ready to vote on it. Above all, he said lawmakers should always focus on people and ideas over partisanship.

“Don’t allow partisanship to define people here. We may have disagreements, but those disagreements shouldn’t be perceived as being personal,” he said.

Hosch said the thing he’ll miss the most about the Legislature is the friends he’s made. He said the hectic and often tumultuous legislative session breeds unique friendships.

“It’s hard to explain, because you go through so much down here,” he said. “We’ve gone through special sessions, government shutdowns, late night budget negotiations with a lot on the line, and you share an experience with people that builds a bond and builds friendship.”

Hosch isn’t sure what comes next for him. He said it’s likely he’ll continue to work on public policy again in some form or fashion. But in the meantime, he plans on taking a well deserved vacation from public office.

“My children have yet to watch a parade from the curbside where they can run after candy being thrown their way,” he wrote in a letter to his constituents. “It is time to take a break from electoral politics and focus on catching candy.”



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Eight years in the House is enough for Rep. Larry Hosch, who is not seeking re-election. With a young family, Hosch wants to step back and focus on his family.