

Back to Bemidji

Moe takes a break from politics to focus on life at home

By Nick Busse

There are things Rep. Frank Moe (DFL-Bemidji) will miss about being a lawmaker, and things that he won't. One thing he'll miss is serving with people who are so dedicated to public service that they're willing to spend every day of every week for five months a year away from their loved ones.

One thing he won't miss is spending so much time away from his own loved one.

"Many people know this is a very difficult job for us and our families," Moe said. "During the session, only to be home for a day or two on the weekends is very difficult, and very hard on our spouses."

Moe and his wife, Sherri, run a pair of businesses — a flower shop in Walker called Grey's Floral and a sled-dog operation called Moetown Kennels, where Moe gives rides and occasionally collects prize money from races. Managing a retail business and 22 dogs is work enough for two people; when the Legislature is in session, all that responsibility falls on Moe's wife. Moe said he wants to spend more time at home,

doing his share of the work — and at the District 4A DFL convention last weekend, he announced his intention not to run for re-election.

"I had the good fortune of serving the district and the state for four years," Moe said. "It was a lot to ask of my wife, and now it's time for me to go home and pull my own weight there."

Moe leaves in his wake some noteworthy achievements. He brought home tens of millions of bonding dollars for projects in his district — most recently, \$20 million for a Bemidji Regional Event Center.

He has also been a driving force in environmental legislation. He's particularly proud of a law he sponsored that will protect native wild rice species from genetically modified rice strains. In order to get it passed, Moe said he had to work with a variety of interests ranging from Native American groups to sportsmen. It was a challenge, but the end result was groundbreaking, nation-leading legislation.

"Environment and conservation policy has been the area in which I've really felt like I've

been a good voice not just for my district but for Minnesota," he said.

Although he's worked on some big policy issues, Moe said the most rewarding part of the job is helping constituents by solving smaller, more concrete problems — like helping adjust the local government aid formula so that Cass Lake didn't have to lay off a couple of police officers.

"I think if you do this job right, 90 percent of what you actually do is constituent services," Moe said.

Although he's not running for re-election, Moe said he plans to stay active in the community and the DFL, and may run for office again someday — maybe.

"Who knows? I'm not closing the door on anything," he said.

After session, he plans to focus on school. He recently received a fellowship from the Bush Foundation, which he will use to complete his doctorate in education from the University of Minnesota.

"I don't know at the end of next year when I'm done with the degree what it will mean," Moe said.

One thing Moe is certain of is his newfound respect for members on both sides of the aisle — and for the sacrifices they make to serve in the House.

"My favorite aspect of being a legislator is working with a truly remarkable crowd of people. Oftentimes we disagree, and maybe vehemently, but I look around this chamber and I see 134 people who are also not with their families today — or maybe this week if they're Greater Minnesota reps — and so they all have that same commitment to service that I have. Sometimes I think some members are way off base, but then I remember that ... they're willing to be away from their home and their family and their business to be here," Moe said.



PHOTO BY TOM OLSCHIED

Beach balls were flying in the House Commerce and Labor Committee Feb. 26 when Rep. Frank Moe, center, members of the Congress of Minnesota Resorts, along with staff and committee members pose for pictures. Earlier the resort owners testified seeking legislation that would stem the decline of resorts in Minnesota.

STEPPING DOWN

Rep. Frank Moe
DFL

District 4A — Bemidji
Terms: 2 (elected 2004)

Advice to successor: "Listen to the people you represent and do what they ask you to do."