

Artist and advocate for natural resources

After eight years in House, Scalze to run for Senate

By ERIN SCHMIDTKE

Rep. Bev Scalze (DFL-Little Canada) hopes to continue representing her constituents next year, albeit in a different chamber at the Capitol.

Due to redistricting, Scalze said she will leave the House to run for the Senate seat in the newly redrawn District 42.

This district, which has no incumbent, sits in the northern suburbs of Ramsey County. Scalze has represented part of this region for eight years, which she sees as an advantage in the upcoming election.

"I think it's going to be really important to have some institutional stability coming from somebody who's been in that district before," she said. Her opponent for the seat has yet to be determined.

Scalze first joined the House in 2004 after serving on the Little Canada City Council for 24 years. Now in her fourth term, she hopes to continue working on the issues in the Senate that she has made her priority in the House.

As a member of the House Capital Investment Committee, Scalze has focused on tackling unemployment and business growth in Minnesota. She successfully sponsored a bill during the last biennium that funded construction of the Rice Street bridge over Highway 36 in Little Canada. The bridge is intended to assist St. Jude Medical Center in its expansion to both sides of the highway.

"To me, what we have to do for jobs is get traffic from point A to point B. That's how our companies succeed," Scalze said. She hopes to repeat the outcome of that bill this session with another Rice Street bridge over Highway 64.

Entrepreneurship is also part of Scalze's personal life. She and her husband own a heating and air conditioning business in White Bear Lake. "I think I can carry some small business issues to folks at the Capitol," she said. Though Scalze is regularly present at the Capitol, she stops by the business every morning at 8 a.m.

Scalze is also passionate about natural resources. As a wildlife artist, she displays her work on the walls of her office, including her illustration that won the 1991 Department of Natural Resources trout stamp contest. Proceeds from trout stamp sales support Minnesota fish conservation.

Scalze brings her love for the environment to the Legislature. A recent project for her in the House was an effort to clean the state's 20,000 storm water ponds, which catch water runoff from housing and business developments. That runoff can carry coal tar residue from driveways and parking lots, which becomes a carcinogenic sludge as it

settles in the pond water. Scalze has worked to ban coal tar sealant and successfully sponsored legislation that requires the use of asphalt instead.

"I am really interested in clean water and a clean environment for our grandchildren and great-grandchildren," Scalze said.

Over the years, Scalze has experienced both success and struggles as a lawmaker. Her first bill introduced as a representative would have established a clean campaign council to regulate negative political advertisements.

"It didn't go anywhere. But certainly what we're seeing today with elections, with what people are saying and doing, this would have been a good idea," Scalze said.


Throughout her years in the House, Scalze has seen the Legislature change as a body. She opposes a reform-minded trend in recent legislation, saying that the attitude some lawmakers have adopted detracts from areas where Minnesota succeeds.

"What I'm seeing this year in some of the bills is that we're doing everything wrong here, we have to change everything. And it's been difficult for our state government employees to watch this, because it's as if they're to blame," she said.

Scalze hopes the House will aim its focus toward unemployment. She would like to see this accomplished through a bonding bill that is limited to infrastructure improvements and college renovations, which she believes are two areas that facilitate economic growth statewide.

"If we could limit it to those things, we could do a lot for jobs," she said.

Though Scalze is looking forward to the upcoming Senate race, she will miss the friendships she's developed with members and staff. For her replacement, she has a few words of advice.

"Just enjoy what you do. It's a people job. You have to love working with people and meeting new people." 

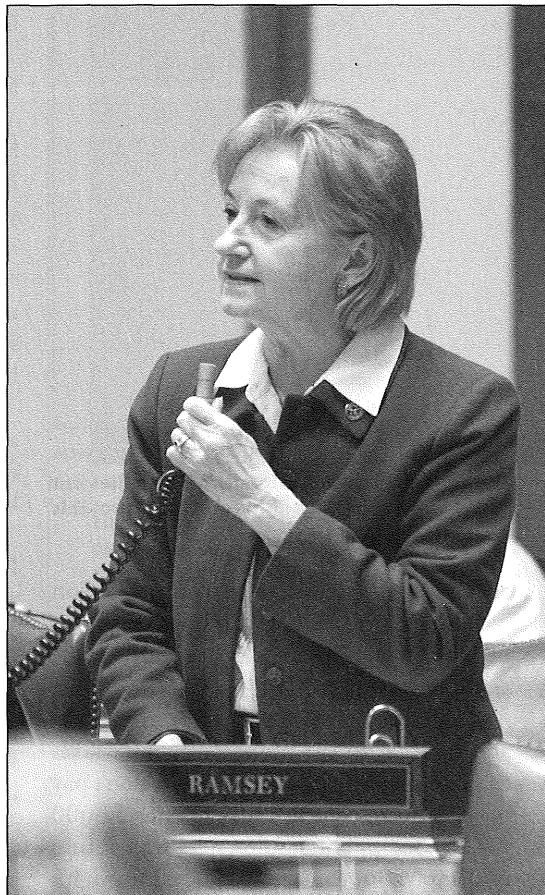


PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Rep. Bev Scalze says her move to the Senate will bring stability for her district.