

Energized to follow a different path

Bar exam, ski trip are in Kalin's immediate future

By SUE HEGARTY

In the span of a few years, a bachelor and would-be architect followed a very different path and instead became a law student, a husband and a state and national leader on energy issues.

Now Rep. Jeremy Kalin (DFL-North Branch) said it's time he took his wife on a long overdue ski vacation. Then, there's this test he'll take in July called the bar exam. Perhaps he'll study for that inside the mountain chalet.

Kalin's life took a sharp turn in 2007 when he began his first term as a legislator and was wed.

"My wife and I were married 11 days after the 35W bridge went down." The conversation went something like this: "Honey, you know that part-time job I have? Well it's actually full-time because my training in architecture means I can actually speak the language of engineers," Kalin said.

For the next two-and-a-half years, the couple has managed the very hectic life of a state representative and an ob-gyn physician who drives 45 miles to deliver babies in Minneapolis.

"We've decided to take a break from campaigns and elected office and enjoy our lives together, while we can still call ourselves newlyweds," Kalin said.

Through the end of his term he'll focus on the proposed Ratepayer Protection Act that would update utility rate structures.

"Our utility rates are really set based on having to expand. We haven't truly modernized the way that we set our utility rates. We've gotten much better at energy efficiency and energy conservation ... and yet we're still in this 1930s and 1940s mode."

In 2009, Kalin was selected by the White House to chair the national, bipartisan Coalition of Legislators

for Energy Action Now. Working with the Obama Administration and the U.S. Senate has been a highlight of his career.

In 2007, he helped craft the Demand Efficiency Act, an energy conservation standard. One year later, Kalin partnered with the Pentagon to pass the Military and Overseas Voting Act, resulting in a 450 percent increase in military and overseas ballots getting counted.

"To make sure our defenders of democracy have that core right to vote was an amazing privilege," Kalin said.

As a freshman legislator, the first bill he

introduced was on behalf of a constituent who returned from Iraq and was denied a deer hunting license because he didn't have a gun safety certificate. "Here's a guy we trusted with an M16 and other sidearms in battle, but we couldn't trust him with a rifle out in the woods." Kalin thought his bill to waive the gun safety requirement for veterans was non-controversial, but he faced opposition. A compromise was eventually reached.

"It taught me that no matter how common sense it sounds, things don't get done simply around here," he added.

He quickly learned not to take it personally. "While things around here can feel petty at times, some of it is just the result of either ourselves or the people we work with not being able to clearly articulate their passion for their subject," Kalin said.

He also played a key role in his district, securing funding to create Ojiketa Regional Park in Chisago City, to build the new North Branch bridge over Interstate 35 and to advance the Highway 8 project in downtown Lindstrom.

Kalin began working on the framework for a 2009 energy stimulus bill even before the federal recovery act passed. It was a "moment in history where the clean energy policies were lining up with the job opportunities," he said. "We were clearly in crisis and I wanted to do whatever I could to get people to work as soon as possible."

His successor will have his or her work cut out for them.

Kalin continued on page 22



PHOTO BY TOM OLMSCHIED

Rep. Jeremy Kalin, who will not seek re-election, hopes his Ratepayer Protection Act will be passed before he leaves office.

STEPPING DOWN

Rep. Jeremy Kalin
DFL
District 17B - North Branch
Terms: 2 (elected 2006)
Advice to successor: "Work as hard here as you worked getting here."

Thursday, April 15

HF3778-Kahn (DFL)

Health Care & Human Services Policy & Oversight

Clinical trial health insurance coverage compliance with federal law required.

HF3779-Gardner (DFL)

Taxes

Metropolitan area transit and paratransit capital expenditure additional financing provided and certain obligation authorization issued.

HF3780-Norton (DFL)

Finance

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system heating and cooling system conversion money reappropriated.

HF3781-Clark (DFL)

Finance

Nanotechnology report required from the University of Minnesota and the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system.

HF3782-Ward (DFL)

State & Local Government Operations Reform, Technology & Elections

Real property transfer authorized to American Indian tribes under certain conditions.

HF3783-Beard (R)

Taxes

Aircraft sales and use tax rate reduced.

HF3784-Otremba (DFL)

Commerce & Labor

Douglas County; Theatre L'Homme Dieu special liquor license allowed.

HF3785-Liebling (DFL)

Taxes

Tax Expenditure Advisory Commission created, and review and sunset provided for tax expenditures.

Donors continued from page 13


would be required to hold a tattoo technician license or a body piercing technician license; both would require the completion of at least 200 hours of supervised experience in the applicant's field and completion of coursework in areas including bloodborne pathogens and infection control. After upfront costs to the state government special revenue fund in fiscal years 2011 through 2013, licensing fees would fund the oversight and inspection of establishments.

The bill also sets health and safety standards for body art procedures, including requiring the use of single-use needles and ink. In a change from current law, technicians would be prohibited from providing tattoo services to anyone under age 18, regardless of parental consent. Bunn said the language is intended to ensure that people who choose to get tattoos have done so based on their own decision-making and autonomy, not due to direction from parents or others.

The subdivision addressing minors is one of several provisions specifically requested by members of the body art community, some of whom collaborated on the bill. Unlike other licensing areas, tattoo and piercing technicians have fewer professional organizations and are harder to work with collectively, Bunn said. The ones she's spoken with believe statewide regulations would add legitimacy and credibility to their profession.

"Most all of them already meet the standards in this bill and they want to make sure that everyone engaged in this work is doing it in a safe way," Bunn said.

"I really don't want that prejudice to return," said Tanika Nolan of ACME Tattoo Co., Inc., in St. Paul, referring to past discrimination against the body arts. "We fought very hard to be mainstream."

Bunn's bill was approved by the House Finance Committee April 9 and sent to the House Ways and Means Committee. A companion, SF525, sponsored by Sen. Yvonne Prettner Solon (DFL-Duluth), was amended by the House Ways and Means Committee to insert the House language into the Senate file. It was approved April 14 and awaits action on the House floor. 

Seifert continued from page 18

non-violent offenders to pick up roadside trash, and another authorizing prisoners to receive two meals instead of three on weekends, which he estimates saved \$3 million. Opponents warned it would cause prison riots, said Seifert; instead, wardens have found that prisoners don't mind "brunch and supper" and the chance to sleep later.


He is also known for last year's Brandon's Law, which allows law enforcement to begin searching immediately for adults who have gone missing under dangerous circumstances. Seifert said it's considered a national model for missing adult laws and that he's been contacted by several states interested in passing similar legislation.

Seifert said he will most miss his colleagues and the "fantastic" staff. He values learning

from the diversity of perspective from lawmakers from all parts of the state, and the lifelong friendships he's made in his job.

However, perhaps his favorite part of politics is local. Seifert said he's proud of having been the top Republican vote-getter in his district of all candidates for any office in each of the seven elections he's been on the ballot, winning many votes cast by non-Republicans as well as his own party faithful.

He truly enjoys the personal ways he is present to the people of his home district, for example, by helping someone with a licensing problem, or attending an Eagle Scout ceremony or high school graduation.

"Those are fun and, I think, very honorable things to do," he said. 

Kalin continued from page 19

"The state's economic challenges are severe," Kalin said. "Not only are we dealing with what's been called the Great Recession, but we're also dealing with the leading edge of the retirement of the baby boomers. We really have to rethink the way we're doing things."

Come late May, Kalin and his wife will focus on packing their bags and waxing their skis. When the honeymoon is over and he passes the bar exam, expect Kalin to continue his work on clean energy initiatives. "I'm pretty sure I'll be in the energy area but we'll see what comes." 