

Family calls him back home

Murdock leaves with better understanding of the district he has served

BY LEE ANN SCHUTZ

A lot can change in four years.

When Rep. Mark Murdock (R-Ottertail) ran for office in 2008, it took a family commitment to make it happen. Everyone helped with his campaign, and after he was elected, his son and daughter-in-law took over duties of running the family hardware store. But now, three grandchildren later, the younger Murdocks can use some grandparent help.

“Three-and-a-half years ago the family demands were there, but not like they are now,” said Murdock who announced he will not seek re-election. “Family comes first ... it always comes first.”

Murdock’s other son is starting a new business, and wants dad’s help. And then there is his 95-year-old mother in Owatonna with whom he would like to spend more time.

“It’s time for me to go home,” he said.

Located in the north central part of the

state, District 10B is a mix of lake country and farming interests with an aging population. Murdock said the people are easy to work with, and his duties as representative afforded him the chance to make some good friends. He will miss his day-to-day constituent contact — working to address their issues.

While the district is primarily Republican, Murdock said he represents people who affiliate themselves with the Independence and DFL parties. “There’s a difference between being a politician and a representative,” he said. He’d like to consider himself the latter.

Murdock remembers one of the first bills he championed — it had to do with the manufactured home industry — and it wasn’t to be the last on the subject with a district that is home to several manufactured home construction facilities. He became the “watch dog” for the manufactured home people, he said.

His goal this session is to get state help for Wadena to rebuild its community center, which was destroyed in a 2010 tornado. He sponsors HF1804, which would appropriate \$4.75 million for the project. The bill awaits action in the House Jobs and Economic Development Finance Committee. He serves on the House Education Reform Committee and would like to see some reform regarding teacher tenure. “I’m concerned about retaining good quality teachers.”

There have been times when Murdock has been frustrated with the gridlock he’s experienced in the Legislature. “But it’s how our system works. That’s the checks and balances,” he said. However, he complimented Gov. Mark Dayton for his willingness to reach out to Republicans.

The new District 10B will be a geographically large challenge for whoever takes over the House seat — and his advice to that person?

“Your constituents are the ones who send you here. They are your No. 1 priority,” he said. It means promptly responding to their e-mails or phone calls. “I try to respond within a day or two,” he said. “It’s all about your constituents and that they can trust the job you are doing down here.” He received some good “freshmen” advice from a colleague during his first term — to sit back, watch, listen and learn. “I took that advice. I speak when I have something to contribute. The more you learn, the more you know and your confidence grows. The main thing is to tell the truth. ... if you don’t know, don’t be afraid to say so.”

Murdock came to the House with a goal of reaching across party lines and he’s proud of his work, and the friends that he has made.

“It’s been a huge learning experience. It probably ranks right up there with coming out of high school and going into college. ... I love my district and the state of Minnesota, but it’s time to move on.”

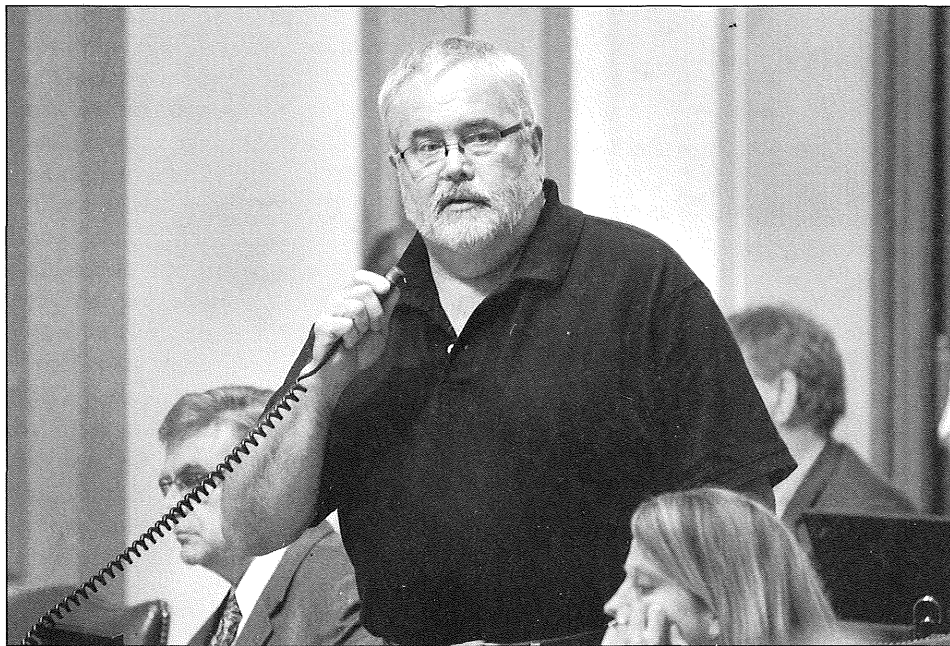


PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

During his time in the House, Rep. Mark Murdock became a self-described “watch dog” for the manufactured home industry, a business sector that employs many in his district.