

Going home to put out different fires

LeMieur plans to spend more time with sons

By ERIN SCHMIDTKE

After a single, busy term in the House, Rep. Mike LeMieur (R-Little Falls) has decided it's time to return home.

He is the father of twin boys, Isaac and Nicholas, 11, and son, Elijah, 13. LeMieur said that because they are at an "impressionable age," he wants to spend more time with them.

"They're growing up so fast. I believe the right thing to do now is to be at home to spend more time with my family and be there when my boys are growing up," he said.

Once the legislative session ends, LeMieur will go back to his life as the co-owner of the family business, Home Furnace Co. in Little Falls. He is also a volunteer firefighter with the Little Falls Fire Department, which he has been a part of for over 20 years.

LeMieur said it has been a struggle to balance that along with his legislative priorities. To get credit as a volunteer, LeMieur has spent his time outside of session fighting fires.

On top of those duties, LeMieur has focused on one of his top priorities as a lawmaker: pro-life legislation.

"It's always been a very important part of why I came here, to protect unborn life," he said.

LeMieur worked in support of bills that would place restrictions on abortion in Minnesota, including illegalizing taxpayer funding of abortions and banning human cloning. He calls the end result of that effort his biggest disappointment while in office. Those pieces of legislation were ultimately vetoed by the governor.

LeMieur has also seen some of his bills succeed during his term in office.

During the 2011 session, one of his first bills sought to change the Rural Preserves and Green Acres programs, which provide tax relief to farmers who own non-productive rural vacant land and productive agricultural land. His bill, which the governor signed into law, removes requirements for farmers looking to enroll in the Rural Preserves



PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

Once session ends, Rep. Mike LeMieur will return fulltime to the family business in Little Falls, where he also serves as a volunteer firefighter.

program.

For the small remainder of the session, LeMieur plans to keep supporting issues that matter to him. Following the settlement of the state government shutdown last session, he said accomplishing that has been easier this year.

"We can concentrate on policy ... with less pounding on the doors," LeMieur said. He added he especially would like to see the Capitol bonding renovation bill become law.

At times, LeMieur admits he was surprised by the partisan nature of the House, but has also seen the good intentions of his fellow legislators. During the last two years, his relationships with his colleagues have turned into friendships.

"There are a lot of great people on both sides of the aisle. We might not agree on a lot of things, but we all want to make Minnesota a better place. ... I made a lot of friendships here I'll take with me," he said.

This becomes immediately apparent as Rep. Joe McDonald (R-Delano) steps off the House floor during the interview to make an interjection.

"This is a great guy," McDonald said of LeMieur.

LeMieur also expressed admiration for other state workers who assist in the day-to-day operations of government.

"The people behind the scenes, the state workers that take care of the Legislature, are wonderful people. Every one of them deserves our respect," he said.

Serving in the Legislature is not LeMieur's first time in politics. He previously spent time on the Little Falls City

Council as president. Despite having been elected to both local and state government, when asked if he had advice for his successor, he responded with a laugh: "No."

Although LeMieur approaches the end of his term in the House, this might not be the end of his political career.

"I'll never close the door on it, that's for sure. But it'd have to be a few years down the line." ❧