

# 'A decade is a long time'

## Eastlund is ready to let someone else take the reins

Editor's Note: As the 2010 session winds down, several members have announced their intentions to leave the Minnesota House of Representatives for new adventures. They leave a legacy of service that will remain part of legislative history.

By Nick Busse

Ten years at the House is enough for Rep. Rob Eastlund (R-Isanti), who doesn't believe politics should be a career. Eastlund originally committed to running for only six years; now, the five-term Republican thinks it's a good time to let someone else take the reins.

"There's a lot of political energy out there right now, and I think it would be a great opportunity for new people to step up," he said. "There's going to be no shortage of people that want to run, I don't think."

Eastlund, who said "a decade is a long time," will miss life at the Capitol — the people, the place, the excitement, and even "the committee controversies and the little squabbles," which he said keep things interesting.

"I'll miss that — being in the midst of all of that," he said.

Above all else, he'll miss working alongside "great people." Eastlund said he's come to respect his fellow House members for the sacrifices they make in order to serve, regardless of political orientation.

"For somebody to go through what you need to do to actually be elected ... and come down here and do this job, I just have a lot of respect for anybody that's willing to do that, because it's a big sacrifice," he said.

Over the last decade, Eastlund has racked up legislative accomplishments in the areas of public safety and veterans issues. He successfully carried legislation modifying the pay differential paid to state employees who are serving as active-duty National Guard members and reservists, and sponsored a number of bills dealing with family law issues like child support and child custody.

Eastlund said law enforcement has been

a focus of his legislative career. Among other things, he said he'd like to see more of a focus on treatment for drug offenders and others with long prison sentences.

"I think we need to be working on more treatment, more rehabilitation, those kinds of things," he said.

As far as his political philosophy, Eastlund said he will leave office with basically the same

perspective he had when he arrived: that government is fundamentally too big.

"Government is growing too fast — I still believe that. And the pressure to keep it growing is immense when you're down here with special interest groups," he said.

Eastlund said Republicans, as well as Democrats, have been guilty of growing government. He points to Republican support for raising the cigarette "health impact fee" — essentially a tax on cigarettes. Eastlund said such "creative" attempts at finding new revenue are probably near an end.

"No matter how creative you get, there's a point where we get resistance, and we're there right now, I think, with the economy where it is."

According to Eastlund, a different kind of creativity is needed — one that can transform government by redesigning services where possible and cutting them where needed.

"I think we're going to see more reform ... more innovation," Eastlund said. "I think we're going to see government maybe become more focused."

Eastlund, who arrived at the Legislature with no grandchildren but will leave with six,

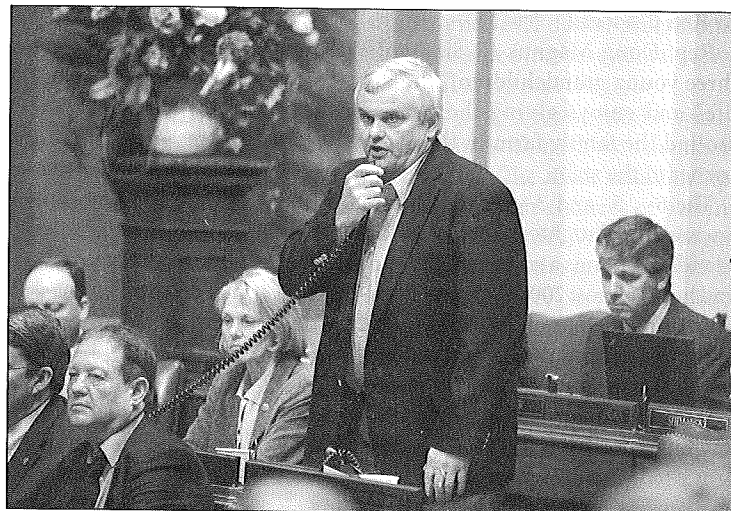


PHOTO BY ANDREW VONBANK

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plans to spend more time with his family. He would also like to get more involved in his church. He has a business to restart, too — property management and real estate — and he also does some farming and commercial building on the side.

Though he'll have a full plate when he returns home, Eastlund said he hasn't thought too much about the future.

"I don't have any big plan — no blueprint of where I go from here," he said.

### STEPPING DOWN

Rep. Rob Eastlund  
Republican

District 17A - Isanti  
Terms: 5 (elected 2000)

Advice to successor: "Listen, a lot, to constituents and more experienced legislators. ... After you've listened to everybody, follow your instincts."