

Looking for better balance

After 12 years, Tingelstad to focus on family

BY COURTNEY BLANCHARD

Rep. Kathy Tingelstad (R-Andover) has a way of standing out at the Capitol. In a hurried environment with a lot of fast-talking political rhetoricians, Tingelstad always takes a moment to think before she speaks, and what she says is clear, meaningful and sincere.

More than 20 years ago, Tingelstad climbed the Capitol steps on a mission to improve the adoption process in Minnesota. She was surprised that, as a volunteer, she helped eliminate the requirement for adoptions to go through an agency, thereby allowing independent adoptions.

"So when I saw how that was done, I thought, 'Well, I'd like to be here as a legislator to be able to work on those issues,'" she said.

One of her proudest moments was the passage of \$100 million in bonding for the

Northstar Commuter Rail project in 2005, "Because it took so many years to get it passed," she said.

Tingelstad still remembers one of her first bills, which impacted at least one person. After a sheriff deputy ticketed a Ramsey man for operating a snow plow with too wide of a blade, the frustrated plower asked her to change the law.

"It was like a one-word change in the law ... but for him it was a huge deal," she said. "After we changed the law, I sent him an actual

copy signed by the governor, and he put that in his glove compartment. And a week later, the Sheriff pulled him over and was going to give him another citation. He says, 'No, there's a new law and I helped to change it!'"

Few things have changed since Tingelstad passed that law, but new technology has sped up the turnaround on amendments. It's made the entire process faster, and now lawmakers introduce more bills compared to 10 years ago.

"Sometimes I'm totally amazed how quickly the Revisor's office can do things with so many bills and so many amendments," she said. "We're probably overworking our staff!"

Since being elected, Tingelstad discovered a passion for environmental issues. During her first year, she was stuck on the environmental committee "because they needed a Republican woman from the suburbs," she said. It became one of her favorite committees.

"This job is truly public service, you're here for your leadership skills, but you have to be able to use the skills in any policy area," she said.

Tingelstad is often described as a moderate, and some would say that the Legislature is losing those kinds of members on both sides.

Delegates delayed Tingelstad's endorsement for reelection this year after she joined five other Republicans to override the governor's veto of the transportation bill. She also lost her position as lead Republican on the House Capital Investment Finance Division.

"I absolutely would vote the same way," she said.

The delayed endorsement just made the decision to step down easier, she said. After 12 years in the House, it's time to move on and find a job that allows her to support her sons through college, she said.

"In the summer, I'm looking forward to not having to door-knock," Tingelstad said.



PHOTO BY SARAH STACKE

Rep. Kathy Tingelstad joins her son, Karl, center, who gets to try the gavel of former House Speaker Steve Sviggum, left. Karl served in the High School Page Program in 2006.

STEPPING DOWN

Rep. Kathy Tingelstad
Republican
District: 49B — Andover
Terms: 6 (elected 1996)
Advice to successor: "It's important to keep good balance in your life. Keep time for family and other things."