

# Former House speaker remembered as one of 'state's great representatives'

◀ SPEAKER FROM B1

Hatch called him "one of the greatest representatives in state history." Hatch recalled watching as Anderson, while speaker, worked to reverse a close vote and ram through a bill to clear an insurance roadblock for women with breast cancer.

"Irv just stared at one Democratic legislator until he voted the right way," Hatch said. "He stood up to institutions that didn't care about people. He never sold out."

Contemporaries said Anderson combined that "evil eye," with knowledge of parliamentary rules to intimidate and trip up legislators in his way.

Friends said he kept a worn copy of the rules of the Minnesota House in a series of cars he wore out making the 600-mile round trip between International Falls and St. Paul nearly every week during the legislative session.

"He often did what he called 'turn-arounds,'" said his daughter, Cindy Kevern. "He'd drive to the Cities one day, stay overnight and come back the next day. ... He really believed in representing northern Minnesota."

## Overcame defeats

Anderson used his power to engineer a broad agenda of legislation on labor, the environment, education and taxes. In the end, his proudest achievement was changing school financing to shift the burden from property taxes to state aid, helping areas with less property wealth.

But his bare-knuckled approach to politics made enemies who sometimes made him pay. They included urban DFLers who staged a coup in 1980, joining Republicans to deny him the post of speaker.

Two years later, Bob Neuenschwander, an International Falls store owner, ran against Anderson and defeated him in the DFL primary. Anderson twice failed to regain his seat in the 1980s and even lost a bid to sit on the Koochiching County Board. He finally beat Neuenschwander by 125 votes in 1990, retook his seat and began his second, most successful legislative stint.

"I probably upset his life more than anybody could have because he loved the legislative process so much," Neuenschwander said. "But he changed a lot in those eight years, and when he came back I think he did a better job for his constituents. Before, he was straight down the line for labor in everything. Later on, he did a better job understanding the perspective of



Star Tribune file photo

**IN HIS DOMAIN:** Irv Anderson's career in the Minnesota House of Representatives included a stint in the 1990s as speaker, where he presided over the chamber under the famous portrait of Abraham Lincoln.

## CAREER OF SERVICE: IRV ANDERSON

### BORN:

June 18, 1923, International Falls

### FAMILY:

Wife, Phyllis; son, Greg; daughter, Cindy Kevern.

### PRIVATE-SECTOR CAREER:

Storekeeper, paper mill employee, union representative

### MILITARY SERVICE:

U.S. Navy, served as a pilot in Pacific Theater during World War II

### POLITICAL CAREER

**1964:** Elected to Minnesota House

**1973:** Elected House majority leader

**1980:** A minority of DFLers joined with Republicans to block him from becoming House speaker

**1982:** Lost to Bob Neuenschwander in DFL primary

**1984:** Made first of two unsuccessful attempts to regain seat

**1990:** Defeated Neuenschwander by 125 votes and regained House seat

**1993:** Elected House majority leader again, then speaker

**1997:** Lost speakership to Rep. Phil Carruthers

**2006:** Retired from Legislature

Sources: Minnesota House, Star Tribune research

small businesses and others."

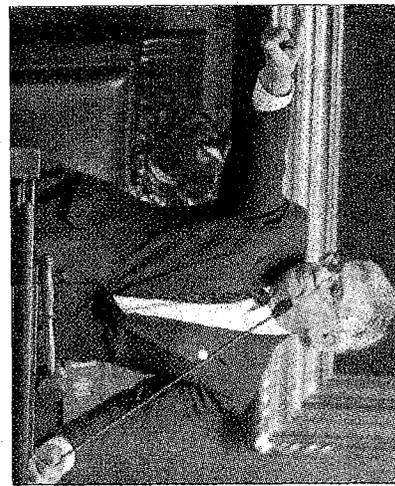
Neuenschwander said their relationship remained strained from the battles they'd had. But when told Monday of Anderson's death, he said: "I am truly sorry to hear that."

The family scheduled Ander-

son's funeral for 10 a.m. Saturday at St. Thomas Catholic Church in International Falls, and a visitation from 5 to 7 p.m. Friday at Green-Larsen Funeral Home, also in International Falls.

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DAVID BREWSTER • Star Tribune file photo  
Irv Anderson, speaker of the House, presided using his vast knowledge of parliamentary rules.



1923 - 2008 FORMER HOUSE SPEAKER IRV ANDERSON

## State loses one of its 'greatest representatives'

• He ruled with an iron fist, got things done and sometimes made enemies in his tenure.

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By LARRY OAKES  
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Former state Rep. Irv Anderson, whose hardball politics and an encyclopedic command of parliamentary rules made him a force for the DFL during a sometimes stormy 34-year career in the Legislature, died Monday in a Coon Rapids hospital. He was 85. Along the way, he helped en-

gineer a major shift in funding for Minnesota's public schools. Anderson, who got into politics in the early 1960s when elected union president at the International Falls paper mill where he worked, won a seat in the Legislature and rose to House speaker but he declined to run in 2006 and retired after he began to have health problems.

"He had a series of strokes, kidney problems and multiple things from there on," son Greg Anderson said Monday. But he remained interested in politics, saying recently he wished he and his wife, Phyllis, could attend Barack Obama's presidential inaugural ball, as they had Bill Clinton's.

When Anderson retired, former Attorney General Mike

Speaker continues: "He never sold out." B7 ▶