

Seifert concludes 14-year House career

He's strived to serve "conscience, constitution and constituents"

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 Kris Berggren

Fourteen years ago, a 23-year-old high school teacher ran for public office to serve his rural southwestern district in the House of Representatives. Today, Rep. Marty Seifert (R-Marshall) is about to finish his seventh term in that office, including three years serving as House minority leader.

Seifert ran for the District 21A seat in 1996 hoping to repeal the Profile of Learning, a controversial set of K-12 education standards authorized in 1992.

"As a classroom teacher," recalled Seifert, "I felt there were people who had no idea how to teach telling teachers what to do," he said. "I felt the bureaucracy in St. Paul was telling teachers how to teach, farmers how to farm, small-business people how to run their businesses, parents how to raise their children.

"So what do you do? Run for office."

Despite his youth, Seifert wasn't intimidated the first time he entered the House chamber, but he was "very humbled, to walk in and realize I am here serving the people."

Within the year, he would become the first lawmaker to sponsor a bill to repeal the Profile. That 1997 bill didn't make it past the education committee; but six years later,

Seifert's goal was realized when Gov. Tim Pawlenty, who had also campaigned on a promise to get rid of the Profile, was in office, and the Senate was persuaded to support the repeal, as the House already had.

Seifert would still like to change the way things are done in St. Paul, so he's running for office again — the governor's office.

One might assume Seifert's gubernatorial aspirations preceded his decision not to run for an eighth term, but that's not the case.

"I was going to go back to Marshall and grow my property management business,"

Seifert said, a decision he made with his wife, Traci. "I assumed Gov. Pawlenty would run for re-election."

In some ways, Seifert said, campaigning for governor is easier than serving as minority leader, a position he held from 2007 until stepping down last June after deciding to seek the chief administrative office.

Serving as minority leader "is a very time consuming position. ... You have 134 candidates to recruit, traveling around the state, fundraising and a caucus full of members with issues to help resolve."

Seifert doesn't think the current House climate is any more or less partisan than when he first arrived, though he believes expectations of government have increased.

"The budget deficit is the biggest political dynamic that has changed," Seifert said. "When I came in, there was a lot of surplus."

Limiting state government's scope while honoring priorities has been a hallmark of Seifert's legislative career. He is proud of his 2005 role as chairman of the House State Government Finance Committee, when, despite a partial government shutdown that year, his finance bill came in on time and on budget, with overall savings to the state but a record increase for veterans and military spending.

He also sponsored a law to allow

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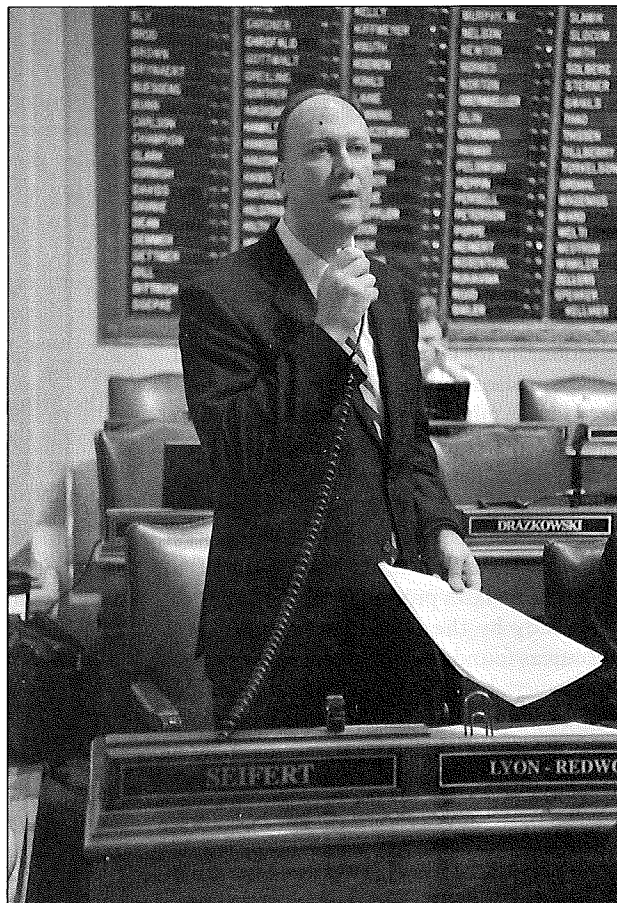


PHOTO BY TOM OLSMSCHIED

Finishing his seventh term as a House member — three serving as House minority leader — Rep. Marty Seifert is running for the governor's chair.

STEPPING DOWN

Rep. Marty Seifert
Republican
District 21A - Marshall
Terms: 7 (elected 1996)

Advice to successor:
"Be honest. Listen to your constituents. Blend the three "C's"— conscience, constitution and constituents — those are the best guideposts you can have in any office."

HF3778-Kahn (DFL)

**Health Care & Human Services
Policy & Oversight**

Clinical trial health insurance coverage compliance with federal law required.

HF3779-Gardner (DFL)

Taxes

Metropolitan area transit and paratransit capital expenditure additional financing provided and certain obligation authorization issued.

HF3780-Norton (DFL)

Finance

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system heating and cooling system conversion money reappropriated.

HF3781-Clark (DFL)

Finance

Nanotechnology report required from the University of Minnesota and the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system.

HF3782-Ward (DFL)

**State & Local Government Operations Reform,
Technology & Elections**

Real property transfer authorized to American Indian tribes under certain conditions.

HF3783-Beard (R)

Taxes

Aircraft sales and use tax rate reduced.

HF3784-Otremba (DFL)

Commerce & Labor

Douglas County; Theatre L'Homme Dieu special liquor license allowed.

HF3785-Liebling (DFL)

Taxes

Tax Expenditure Advisory Commission created, and review and sunset provided for tax expenditures.

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would be required to hold a tattoo technician license or a body piercing technician license; both would require the completion of at least 200 hours of supervised experience in the applicant's field and completion of coursework in areas including bloodborne pathogens and infection control. After upfront costs to the state government special revenue fund in fiscal years 2011 through 2013, licensing fees would fund the oversight and inspection of establishments.

The bill also sets health and safety standards for body art procedures, including requiring the use of single-use needles and ink. In a change from current law, technicians would be prohibited from providing tattoo services to anyone under age 18, regardless of parental consent. Bunn said the language is intended to ensure that people who choose to get tattoos have done so based on their own decision-making and autonomy, not due to direction from parents or others.

The subdivision addressing minors is one of several provisions specifically requested by members of the body art community, some of whom collaborated on the bill. Unlike other licensing areas, tattoo and piercing technicians have fewer professional organizations and are harder to work with collectively, Bunn said. The ones she's spoken with believe statewide regulations would add legitimacy and credibility to their profession.

"Most all of them already meet the standards in this bill and they want to make sure that everyone engaged in this work is doing it in a safe way," Bunn said.

"I really don't want that prejudice to return," said Tanika Nolan of ACME Tattoo Co., Inc., in St. Paul, referring to past discrimination against the body arts. "We fought very hard to be mainstream."

Bunn's bill was approved by the House Finance Committee April 9 and sent to the House Ways and Means Committee. A companion, SF525, sponsored by Sen. Yvonne Prettner Solon (DFL-Duluth), was amended by the House Ways and Means Committee to insert the House language into the Senate file. It was approved April 14 and awaits action on the House floor.

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non-violent offenders to pick up roadside trash, and another authorizing prisoners to receive two meals instead of three on weekends, which he estimates saved \$3 million. Opponents warned it would cause prison riots, said Seifert; instead, wardens have found that prisoners don't mind "brunch and supper" and the chance to sleep later.

He is also known for last year's Brandon's Law, which allows law enforcement to begin searching immediately for adults who have gone missing under dangerous circumstances. Seifert said it's considered a national model for missing adult laws and that he's been contacted by several states interested in passing similar legislation.

Seifert said he will most miss his colleagues and the "fantastic" staff. He values learning

from the diversity of perspective from lawmakers from all parts of the state, and the lifelong friendships he's made in his job.

However, perhaps his favorite part of politics is local. Seifert said he's proud of having been the top Republican vote-getter in his district of all candidates for any office in each of the seven elections he's been on the ballot, winning many votes cast by non-Republicans as well as his own party faithful.

He truly enjoys the personal ways he is present to the people of his home district, for example, by helping someone with a licensing problem, or attending an Eagle Scout ceremony or high school graduation.

"Those are fun and, I think, very honorable things to do," he said.

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"The state's economic challenges are severe," Kalin said. "Not only are we dealing with what's been called the Great Recession, but we're also dealing with the leading edge of the retirement of the baby boomers. We really have to rethink the way we're doing things."

Come late May, Kalin and his wife will focus on packing their bags and waxing their skis. When the honeymoon is over and he passes the bar exam, expect Kalin to continue his work on clean energy initiatives. "I'm pretty sure I'll be in the energy area but we'll see what comes."