

Hayner devoted tireless energy to 16th District

What can anyone say about Jeannette Hayner that hasn't already been said?

She's smart. She's tough. She says what she means and she means what she says. She's accomplished the impossible by keeping control of her party and the Senate with just a one-vote majority. The state and the 16th District owe her a huge debt of gratitude.

All of these things are being said over and over and all of them are true.

With the announcement on Tuesday afternoon that the veteran of 20 years in the Legislature won't seek re-election, friends and foes alike are searching for just the right words to summarize the career of a woman who has helped guide the state through prosperous times and through recessions.

Over the years when there have been issues in which Hayner believed, she has been willing to go toe-to-toe against governors, Democrats, lobbyists, the media and even members of her own Republican party. It was this willingness to stand up against difficult odds that made her effective at hammering out compromises. She has been able to skillfully navigate the obstacles between her and success.

Again, all of these things have been said and need to be said. However, the less visible aspects of Hayner's career may be the most revealing.

Jeannette Hayner has given the most precious commodity anyone can give to a community — her time. Serving as either majority leader or minority leader since the closing days of the 1979 session, she has spent countless hours doing what she thought was best for her district, her party and for the state. People may question her positions, but no one can question her sincerity or her determination to do what she believes is right.

She may hold the record for late-night meetings, early morning breakfasts and working lunches. The flight from Seattle to Walla Walla (after coming up from Olympia) could easily bear her name as she shuttled back and forth between her home and her political responsibilities.

While the schedule of a party leader is crammed with meetings, phone calls, letters and speaking engagements, Hayner always made time for her constituents. She was willing to listen and would move heaven and earth if she believed in the cause.

Her accomplishments are well documented. What she has meant to this district and the state can't adequately be put into words. If more people demonstrated the tireless devotion and willingness to give of themselves in the manner in which Hayner has, many of our "unsolvable" problems might be resolved.