

Hayner won't run

Republicans searching for 16th District candidate after majority leader announces she won't seek re-election

SUMMARY: After weeks of keeping fellow politicians and members of the media guessing, Senate Majority Leader Jeannette Hayner announced that she will not seek re-election. Rep. Dick Neher, R-Walla Walla, may run for her seat.

By Union-Bulletin and AP

OLYMPIA — Sen. Jeannette Hayner's decision not to seek re-election has set off a political shuffle in the 16th District.

Rep. Dick Neher, R-Walla Walla, said today that he is seriously considering a bid for the Senate seat she will vacate.

Several other qualified Republicans are also looking into the possibility of running, said John Lohrmann, precinct committee chairman for Walla Walla County Republicans. But likely they will wait for Neher to make the first move, he added.

If Neher decides to run for the Senate, other contenders may mount campaigns for Neher's House seat, or challenge Democratic Rep. Bill Grant, Lohrmann said.

"(Neher's) a natural for the seat," Lohrmann said. "He's certainly somebody I will be encouraging to run. But there are also a number of other qualified people interested."

Neher said he needs some time to explore the possibility of a campaign. He plans to announce his intentions next week. If he runs, he will join two Democratic contenders, Mike Cahill and Don Schwerin.

"Certainly I have nothing but admiration for Sen. Hayner," Neher said this morning. "I would be



SEN. JEANNETTE HAYNER

honored to follow in her footsteps."

Hayner, a 20-year Republican legislator from Walla Walla and Senate majority leader, announced her intention to retire Tuesday afternoon.

Most insiders were predicting she would run again and not even her closest allies knew what she would do. However, Hayner said she made her decision before the 1992 session began in January and never wavered.

"Dutch (her husband) was the only one who knew," she said with a delighted laugh at being able to keep a secret for half a year in Olympia politics.

Hayner earned a reputation as a tough negotiator and a pragmatic conservative during two decades at the state capital.

Accolades poured in from conservatives and liberals alike after Hayner announced she wouldn't run for re-election this fall.

Hayner, 73, said she wants to spend more time with her family

and will continue working as a private citizen for issues she cares about. She rejected the "anti-legislative cynicism currently in vogue" and said she hoped her departure would not be interpreted as bowing to the throw-the-rascals-out mentality.

"It was a hard decision, when you've done something for 20 years and enjoyed it so much," Hayner said. "But it was the right decision."

Looking back over her political career, Hayner named the state budget crises of this last session and the early 1980s as the most trying and most satisfactory times to be in government.

"The Democrats wanted to immediately raise taxes, but we did it without a tax increase," she said, referring to the \$900 million budget shortfall the state faced this biennium.

She also alluded to her ability to keep Senate Republicans voting together.

For the past five years, Hayner has ruled the Senate with an iron fist, despite the one-seat majority, to the delight of conservatives who saw their agenda at center stage for the first time in years, and to the chagrin of liberals who were frequently frustrated.

"I think every member (of the Republican caucus) felt a sense of unity — almost without exception — on important issues," she said.

However, Hayner's good humor and willingness to find pragmatic, common-ground solutions with majority House Democrats won her praise from both parties.

"She's my favorite conservative," cooed House Speaker Joe

✓ Hayner draws praise from foes, friends alike

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King, D-Vancouver, campaigning in the Tri-Cities. "I really have appreciated Jeannette. We were able to solve a lot of our state's problems despite some strong philosophical disagreements.

"Without Jeannette, it is unlikely we would have solved our \$900 million budget problem within 60 days this year."

Democratic Gov. Booth Gardner also has great admiration for Hayner and remains grateful that she rescued the growth-management legislation that he and King had sent to the Senate, said Gardner press secretary Dan Youmans.

"She is very wise," said Smith, a leader of the conservative wing of the caucus. "She carries no chip on her shoulder. She has been one of the strongest leaders I have ever seen."

The day's only negative comment came from state Democratic Chairwoman Karen Marchioro, who said she was glad that a roadblock to progressive legislation is being removed.

Hayner was the first woman to hold the top leadership role in either house. One of only two women in her University of Oregon Law School graduating class, she has been a mentor and role model for a number of women office-holders. Hayner, quietly pro-choice on abortion, said she did not consider herself a feminist or a trailblazer.

A line began forming to succeed her as majority leader, assuming the Republicans keep the majority after the November

elections. Hayner will oversee the GOP campaigns and will keep her leadership post until after the election. She said she will not endorse a successor.

Among those mentioned for the position: Caucus Chairman George Sellar of East Wenatchee and Deputy Majority Leader Emilio Cantu of Bellevue. Younger members of the leadership team, and potential candidates, include Gary Nelson of Edmonds and Ann Anderson of Acme, both running for higher office this fall, and Neil Amondson of Centralia, Jim West of Spokane and Linda Smith of Vancouver.

Hayner served on the Walla Walla School Board and the local YWCA and mental health boards before winning election to the state House in 1972. She advanced to the Senate four years later, and within three years was elevated to the post of Republican leader after a caucus coup toppled Sen. Jim Matson of Yakima Valley.

In her announcement, Hayner spent most of her time talking about her caucus and its efforts to block taxes, aid small businesses and push for more education dollars.

"Some people have flattered me by saying that our caucus will not be as strong without me as leader," she added. "This is nice to hear, but it simply is not true. The Senate Republican Caucus has remained strong because its strength depends on ideas, not personalities.

"And there are many strong, determined members in our caucus who are able to step into new leadership roles to carry on with our philosophy."