

Scheid's true to her political persuasions

Rep. Linda Scheid said she could have stayed at the Legislature forever, but doesn't believe that anybody should. So when a 9:30 p.m. call with a job offer from Burnet Realty "came out of the clear blue," she didn't mull over the decision.

After 11 years at the House preaching that a two-year election cycle and significant turnover are good, Scheid was happy to discover that when the time came, she really could practice what she preached.

"I surprised myself," she said, adding that she was genuinely excited by the process whereby "new blood" enters the DFL.

She quickly accepted the newly created job of vice president for community relations (*read: lobbyist*) and officially resigned from her legislative seat just a short time later.

"I didn't feel like it was *my* seat," she added.

Scheid worked as a real estate agent in the early 1980s and likened selling real estate to politics. "You have to sell yourself," she said. "People have to trust you and like you for you to be successful."

She also likes the people in real estate,



Former Rep. Linda Scheid

who, she said, "are very upbeat."

Scheid said she will miss being on the House floor for the debates the most, but will still be keeping an eye on the

process. Of particular concern to her is a proposal to delay Minnesota's presidential primary — a law she helped craft as chair of the Elections Division of the General Legislation, Veterans Affairs and Gaming Committee.

Both DFL and IR party officials oppose the primary and local officials are upset the Legislature didn't provide funding to conduct it.

"The DFL Party is very elitist on this issue," said Scheid. "In 1989, the party dictated the language" for the primary legislation "and now they don't want to go along," she said.

Scheid believes that precinct caucuses are much too rule-bound for most voters and that the presidential primary would get more voters involved and give them a better choice.

"I want the average voter to feel that they have some effect on choosing the president," she said.

It's still unclear whether that will happen this year. But Scheid has been honing one other skill that could be of use in settling ongoing political disputes.

She has been studying to become a professional mediator.

The first woman House speaker (for a day)

While Rep. Dee Long (DFL-Mpls) may be the newly elected speaker of the House, she is not the first woman to bang the gavel on the House floor. That honor goes to Hannah J. Kempfer of Erhard, Minnesota.

A native Norwegian, Kempfer came to the United States at age six, and later farmed in Otter Tail County before winning election to the House in 1923. She was one of four women elected that year who served as Minnesota's first female representatives.

She was highly respected by her colleagues and given the moniker "The Lady from Otter Tail County." Those same colleagues appointed her honorary speaker for the day on Jan. 28, 1925.

News of Kempfer's early speakership-

for-a-day was brought to the attention of Sen. Cal Larson (IR-Fergus Falls), who then issued a press release. Kempfer's niece lives in the senator's legislative district.

Shortly after then-Speaker John Johnson turned over the podium, a proposal to increase the gasoline tax was hotly debated. The press later reported that Kempfer "had little trouble keeping the 128 male representatives in order."

Characterized as a "progressive member of the conservative party" who championed laws protecting women and children in industry, Kempfer continued to serve in the House until 1929, and was again elected from 1933-41. She died two years later at the age of 63.



Hannah Kempfer, left, was described in an old newspaper account as "economical to the nth degree."

—photo courtesy
Minnesota Historical Society