

# Jeannette Hayner G.O.P. caucus leader

by Peter Rinearson  
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Senator Jeannette Hayner of Walla Walla last night solidified her position as the top woman legislator in state history, when the strongest Senate Republican caucus in 23 years named her its leader.

Senator Jack Jones of Bellevue was elected caucus chairman, the No. 2 leadership post.

"I think we'll work very closely together," Jones said, when asked whether he expected Hayner to dominate the caucus.

Senator George Clarke of Mercer Island was renamed floor leader, Senator Alan Bluechel of Kirkland was named whip, and Senator Eleanor Lee of Burien was elected caucus vice-chairwoman, in a meeting of all 24 Republican senators, nine of whom are newly elected.

Senator Sid Morrison of Zillah was among those attending, although he was elected to Congress from the 4th District and will resign his state seat.

Republicans undercut at Democratic dominance in the State Senate when they picked up a net of five seats in Tuesday's election. The



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Democrats hold control by a single seat, with Republicans holding 24 of the chamber's 49 seats.

Republicans picked up a substantial majority in the House, breaking the 49-49 tie in that chamber.

Hayner has had the title Senate Republican Leader for 17 months, since she helped engineer a coup in June, 1979, at the conclusion of the longest legislative session in state history. Ten of the 19 Republicans then in the Senate threw out the conventional heirarchical caucus organization and set up a leadership committee, gambling that the unusual arrangement would offer the party a better chance of taking a majority in the 1980 election.

Hayner was "the first among equals" on the committee, with Senator Bob Lewis of Spokane and Senator George Scott of Seattle rounding it out.

But the new role fashioned for Hayner by the Republicans last night is more significant than the same-name role she has held for a year and a half. The heirarchical caucus structure was reinstated last night, with Hayner at the top. Lewis and Scott are off the leadership team entirely — Lewis because he lost re-election and Scott because he suddenly decided not to run for his leadership post yesterday afternoon.

Furthermore, the new-found numerical strength of the caucus gives Hayner potential clout unmatched by a Senate Republican leader in recent memory.

After the caucus completed its re-organization behind closed doors, Hayner and the four other new leaders emerged to grin and proclaim a new strength for the party. Because the caucus is only one vote short of a majority, Hayner said, "We will often be able to pick up a vote from the other side" to pass Republican-favored legislation.

Being one vote short of a majority is the next best thing to control, said a pleased Republican state chairman, Senator Max Benitz of Prosser. "We wouldn't be feeling much better if we had a 25-24 majority."

Hayner, 61, is an attorney who ran unopposed for re-election to a second term in the Senate this year. She served two terms in the House before joining the Senate.

Senate Democrats were to meet today at 8:30 a.m. to select their leaders, and House Republicans were to meet at 9 a.m. at the Sheraton in Renton. House Democrats will not make their choices until November 23.

Neither Scott nor Jones would discuss in detail how it happened that Jones replaced Scott as caucus chairman. Jones worked in recent days to gather the caucus votes necessary to elect him, and said he thought he had enough to win the post.

"I'm not running for re-election," Scott told a reporter before the meeting began last night. When did he decide not to run?

"This afternoon," Scott replied. "Enough said?"