

# **GOP boss Hayner to retire**

## **Senate leader kept her party together**

**By Jim Erickson**

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OLYMPIA — Sen. Majority Leader Jeannette Hayner, whose iron rule of the Senate Republican caucus has frustrated Democratic opponents in recent years, is leaving the Legislature after 20 years in office.

The Walla Walla Republican said yesterday that she would not run for re-election to the 16th District Senate seat so she could spend more time with her family. Hayner, 73, has led Senate Republicans for the past 13 years. She was the first woman to hold the position of Senate majority leader in the Washington Legislature.

Hayner said yesterday she decided before the 1992 session began that this would be her last year in office.

"There were all kinds of reasons," she said. "It was time to quit. I've been minority or majority leader since 1979, and that is some kind of a record. I just felt I had been in the Legislature for 20 years, and I wanted to do some other things."

Hayner's departure comes as a blow to Senate Republicans. Despite having just a one-vote edge over Senate Democrats, 25-24.

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# Hayner: She knew how to use her clout

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Hayner has been able to keep patched together a fractious Republican caucus that sometimes appeared on the brink of disintegration.

That has enabled Republicans to consistently stymie legislation proposed by the House, which is overwhelmingly Democratic, and by Gov. Booth Gardner, a two-term Democrat.

The Senate deadlock that torpedoed major health care reform vigorously pushed by Gardner and the House during the 1992 legislative session is only the most recent example of her clout as perhaps the state's most powerful legislator.

"Her leaving is going to release the stranglehold on a lot of legislation," said Sen. Sylvia Skratke, D-Kent.



Hayner

"We certainly understand her decision," said Sen. George Sellar, R-We-natchee, "but we wish she made a different one. Her leadership will be sorely missed."

With more than a dozen senators retiring or seeking other offices, control of the upper house is already up for grabs in elections this fall.

Should Republicans remain in control, they will be hard pressed to vote strictly along partisan lines without Hayner to keep them together. Increasingly, hard-core fundamentalist Christians in the caucus have been warring with more moderate Republicans from the state's suburbs.

"They had some very polarized points of view in their caucus," said Marc Gaspard, minority leader of the Senate Democrats, "and she was the only person who could bring them together."

"There are plenty of examples where her leadership has been do-nothing," Gaspard said. "I didn't always agree with her, but I have high regard for her credibility and her honesty, and her understanding that sometimes people of different beliefs have to reach agreement on difficult issues, like the budget."

Hayner's departure could also touch off a struggle for her replacement. Already planning to run for majority leader is Sellar, the caucus chair, and Sen. Emilio Cantu, R-Bellevue and deputy majority leader.

Also said to be potential candidates are Sen. Jim West, Spokane Republican who chaired the Senate Health and Long-Term Care Committee, and Sen. Linda Smith, R-Vancouver, a fundamentalist Christian and assistant whip.

Hayner said yesterday she intends to stay involved in politics and committees after her stint as majority leader ends next fall. She is a member of Gardner's blue-ribbon commission on education, and she will remain chairwoman of the Senate Republican campaign committee.

"I've been involved in politics all my life," she said.

Born in Portland, Hayner earned a law degree from the University of Oregon in Eugene. She met her husband, Walla Walla lawyer H.H. "Dutch" Hayner, while getting her degree.

Hayner said yesterday she decided to step down partly because she wanted to spend more time with her five grandchildren, three of whom live out of state. Majority leader is "a year-round job."

She added that in her 20-year career as a lawmaker, she was perhaps proudest of her membership in a caucus that "has been a major force in the political direction of our state."

"The battles that we have fought and won — against higher taxes, against a new tax on services, against a state income tax, against unnecessary regulation of business, for private property rights — will continue to be fought and won after I retire."

Hayner insisted that public dissatisfaction with politicians had nothing to do with her decision to retire.

"I know that voters are smart enough to know that length of service in the Legislature is often a tremendous asset, not a liability."