

# Hayner to quit, leave big void in GOP

by Barbara A. Serrano / Times Olympia bureau

OLYMPIA — She once suggested farmworkers ate more than their share of the strawberries they were picking and that castration was probably the most publicly desired punishment for sex offenders.

State Sen. Majority Leader Jeannette Hayner, R-Walla Walla, was never one to mince words or to flinch at a bruising political fight. But after 20 years in the Legislature, she's calling it quits.

Yesterday's announcement of her retirement from politics ends the tenure of one of Washington's most influential legislative leaders and officially opens the door to new and uncertain leadership within the Republican Party.

Come January, observers say, the fractious and fragile Republican Caucus in the state Senate is likely to return with a new set of faces and possibly a less conservative personality.



**'Our legislative system does work. It doesn't provide instant gratification or easy answers, but it does solve problems.'**

State Sen. Jeannette Hayner

"It's a real loss for the state, and I think, a very sad day for Republicans," GOP consultant Brett Bader said of Hayner's departure. "She is without a doubt the Republi-

cans' pre-eminent leader."

Hayner, 73, said yesterday she wants to spend more time with her husband, H.H. "Dutch" Hayner, and her family in Walla Walla. They have three children and five grandchildren.

"I am proud of what I have been able to accomplish during my 20 years in the Legislature," Hayner said in a prepared statement.

"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."

She specifically noted that she's not part of the wave of politicians checking out of office because of the nation's

Please see **HAYNER** on B 2

# State GOP leader to retire from Senate

## HAYNER

continued from B 1

anti-incumbent mood and cynicism toward politics.

"Our legislative system does work," Hayner said. "It doesn't provide instant gratification or easy answers, but it does solve problems. And I know voters are smart enough to know that length of service in the Legislature is often a tremendous asset, not a liability."

For 13 years, she steered the Republican majority in the state Senate and during the past five years had to do it with the slimmest of advantages: 25 Republicans over 24 Democrats. While she often garnered more media attention for her bluntness, she earned wide-ranging respect from both Republicans and Democrats for her knack at striking a deal.

Much like Margaret Thatcher, the former British prime minister she admired, Hayner often railed against government regulation and taxes and promoted the view that people can best be helped by helping themselves.

"She has strong opinions, many of which I don't agree with," said Hayner's counterpart, state Sen. Minority Leader Marc Gaspard, D-Puyallup. "But I do admire her because she cared about the Legislature as an institution, and she set a good exam-

ple of integrity and honesty."

Elected to the Legislature in 1973, Hayner six years later became the first woman in Washington to be elected by her peers to the Senate's top leadership position. More notably, perhaps, she has held the reins to power within a caucus longer than any Republican or Democrat in state history.

No small task, given that the GOP caucus remains as varied as the people it represents — from moderate suburban residents, to rural farmers, to staunch religious-minded conservatives.

"You have to have someone who can keep them (Republican senators) focused on what the agenda is and soothe a lot of egos," said John Rico, a top Republican strategist.

To be sure, Hayner was ultimately a pragmatist.

### Salvaged growth plan

Sensing that the public wanted limits on growth and development, Hayner last year single-handedly salvaged the Growth Management Act.

Despite opposition from fellow Republicans, she stuck to a promise she made with Democrats to work on the proposal and made sure Republicans could claim some victory in the final package.

This year, she kept the lid on a potentially divisive issue by salvaging a bill that made the Washington African-American

Affairs Commission a permanent fixture in state government. But for the most part, it has been Hayner's job to stop Gov. Booth Gardner and his fellow Democratic legislators dead in their tracks at the Senate door. And most of the time she did.

In one of the Democrats' most stinging defeats this year, Hayner dug in and refused — for the third year in a row — to allow a vote on the Gardner's hate-crimes legislation. Among other things, the bill would have strengthened language outlawing cross burnings and make it a crime to harass homosexuals.

Hayner and other Republicans said they were opposed to giving "special rights" to anyone and let the bill die without a vote.

Ethnic minorities, farmworkers and gays and lesbians are among those who aren't sorry to see Hayner leave.

"Alleluia!" chortled George Finch, an organizer for Centro Campesino, a farmworkers group in Sunnyside, Yakima County. "She and Irv Newhouse (the Republican state senator from Mabton) have been the strongest opponents to any kind of change or improvement for farmworkers."

The Republicans' solidarity frayed at the edges this year, and while that's not unusual for such a mixed group, some say the split appeared more pronounced.

In February, Hayner had to ease tensions between moderate Republicans and religious con-

servatives over the Natural Death Act, which strengthens the right of a dying or comatose person to refuse food and water.

And on the last day of the session, Senate Democrats had to patch together a budget compromise because the Republicans were barely talking to each other.

### Potential successors

No one has been groomed to succeed Hayner. And it isn't clear just how the caucus will shake out until the November election, said GOP Senate chief of staff Martin Flynn.

Among those mentioned by party insiders as potential successors to Hayner: George Sellar of East Wenatchee, Emilio Cantu of Mercer Island, Jim West of Spokane, and Neil Amondson of Centralia.

Many figure state Sen. Linda Smith of Hazel Dell, Clark County, will also seek to become caucus leader.

Other ranking Republicans, such as Sen. Dan McDonald of Bellevue, Sen. Gary Nelson of Edmonds and Sen. Ann Anderson of Acme in Whatcom County are running for higher offices. But depending on what happens in November and whether they return to the Senate, they could end up putting their names into the pot as well, Flynn said.

Hayner will continue to chair the Senate Republican Campaign Committee, directing strategy and fund-raising efforts.