

Ed Brooks: An honor and a privilege

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How do you say good bye? It isn't easy, but after ten years as your state representative, I've decided to step aside to focus my efforts on dealing with cancer, which has unfortunately returned after a period of remission. While I may be headed out to pasture (sorry, the farmer in me couldn't resist), I do so knowing that Wisconsin is moving in the right direction, and that we've come a long way over the past decade.

When I took office at the height of the recession, unemployment was nearing 10%, and many people were struggling to find a job, make ends meet, or see a light at the end of the tunnel. Today, Wisconsin's unemployment rate is the lowest in state history. Taxes are lower today than they were in 2011, and we've been able to make the single largest increase in K-12 education funding in the state's history while also building the largest rainy day fund. Our economy is growing, and that means more opportunities.

I have spent my time in the legislature working to ensure that those opportunities are available to everyone, no matter where in the state they happen to live. I joined with Reps. Romaine Quinn and Travis Tranel to launch the Rural Wisconsin Initiative, a series of bills aimed at improving access to health care, education, technology, and the workforce. Over the last two sessions, we've promoted and funded broadband expansion, developed training grants for rural health care workers, incentivized teachers to move to our part of the state, and created new ways for students to get worker training. Rural Wisconsin is a great place to live, work, and raise a family - and I think our best days are still ahead. That's why it's so hard to step aside.

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Sometimes, it's too hard to say good bye - so I won't. Instead, I'll say thank you. I want to thank my children and grandchildren for their support and for being a reminder to always think about the future when making decisions. I want to thank my wife, Barb - for her strength, her patience, and her love. We have a great partnership, and I owe so much to her. Finally, I want to thank you - the people of the 50th district. You chose me to be your representative, and I've appreciated the opportunity to hear your thoughts, concerns, and aspirations. I've always said that the 50th district is the best district - and that's because of the people.

I've taken the responsibility you've given me seriously, and it's been an honor and a privilege to be your voice in Madison. God bless you.

— *Brooks, R-Reedsburg, represents the 50th Assembly District.*