

Western Legislators: Bill Bowman Will Be Missed

The announcement this week by Senator Bill Bowman that he will not seek re-election this fall didn't surprise any of his colleagues, but it did call to everyone's attention the value of his contribution to western North Dakota and the entire state.

Senator Majority Leader Rich Wardner, R-Dickinson, recalled a number of Bowman's noteworthy accomplishments. Wardner said Bowman was instrumental in passage of the "surge bill" during the 2013 session to help western communities catch up with infrastructure needs. He said Bowman also figured prominently in creation of the state Legacy Fund, as well as widening Highway 85 to four lanes between Watford City and Williston.

Wardner said Bowman was a tireless advocate for Bowman County, which saw a surge in oil activity years before the main Bakken boom took off.

"Bill was always trying to educate people about the needs in Bowman County," Wardner said. "It was like a mini-Bakken down there, and he worked hard to get dollars for Bowman because they really got hit hard (by the boom)."

Wardner said Senator Bowman was also a strong advocate for agriculture. He recalled that Bowman pushed hard for the Centers of Excellence, as well as greenhouses and the diagnostic laboratory at North Dakota State University that support its work in plant and animal science.

Rep. Vicky Steiner, R-Dickinson, also recalled Bowman's role in securing a share of taxes on minerals controlled by the Bureau of Land Management. She said Bowman was insistent that the state receive a 50% share of revenue collected in all oil- and coal-producing counties.

Wardner added that Bowman not only made sure the state got its share, but was also insistent that a portion of the revenue be directed to political subdivisions directly impacted by energy development.

Bowman, a Republican from Bowman, cited health reasons for his decision. He has served in the state legislature since 1991, and will turn 72 this year. Bowman represents District 39, the state's largest legislative district, which stretches from Watford City to the South Dakota border.