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ABERDEEN: Harvey Jewett stepping down from president's seat on regents

April 02, 2009 | By Bob Mercer, American News Correspondent

Richard Belatti of Madison said Thursday he's retiring from his seat on the state Board of Regents, while longtime president Harvey Jewett of Aberdeen made official his plans to step aside but remain on the board.

“You get a feeling in the pit of your stomach,” Jewett said.

He was first appointed as a regent in 1997 by then-Gov. Bill Janklow and has been board president since 1999.

The regents govern South Dakota's public universities and special schools. Belatti and Jewett made their announcements during the regents' meeting at Northern State University.

“I think there's just a time when you stay too long,” Jewett said. “It is my feeling. I actually have been thinking about it for a year, and really this session came to the conclusion that maybe we need to bring in a new pitcher. I can continue to help in any way the (new) president desires.”

The board selected Terry Baloun as the new president Thursday. Today is Jewett's last day in the role. Baloun, an alumnus of Northern State who splits time between Sioux Falls and rural Faulkton, takes over at the conclusion of today's meeting.

Jewett said a president can only make so many requests to the Legislature, the governor and the governor's chief of staff before a fresh voice is needed.

“I've loved this job almost every day. There's been times when it's kind of a real pain. It has been rewarding. Things are rewarding when they're important, when you feel like you're getting something done and you're contributing,” he said.

Later in the meeting, Jewett made remarks that were more candid regarding the legislative budget process.

“I really did feel like we were treated like the enemy. We got no credit that for 16 years we hadn't gotten an inflationary increase in our operating account,” Jewett said. “We need to find a way to re-establish a relationship with the (governor's) budget office, with the (Legislature's) appropriations committee, and develop a stable platform (for funding).”

The board changes come at the same time that regents executive director Tad Perry plans to retire effective July 1 or when a replacement can be hired.

Gov. Mike Rounds hasn't announced his choice for a successor to Belatti.

“It really is kind of a bittersweet occasion for me. I certainly enjoyed my time on the board,” said Belatti, a retired medical doctor. “I think it's been a very constructive six years.”

He was appointed to the board on Feb. 23, 2003, by Rounds. The two men served together in the Legislature.

Belatti was a member of the Senate from 1989 through 1992 from Minnehaha County. He returned as a member of the House of Representatives from 1995 through 1998 from Lake County.

Belatti referred to the state law requiring that a regent “shall be a person of probity and wisdom.”

“I think I have probity enough but I'm not so sure about my wisdom,” he said.

During his six years Belatti participated in selection of six university presidents, one university interim president and one superintendent.

He said university enrollment is at a record high in spite of demographics. He noted the many construction projects, including the new University Center complex in Sioux Falls and the new Capital University Center building under construction in Pierre, as well as the plans for a new West River higher education center in Rapid City.

He said the number of doctorate level programs has significantly increased, as have university courses overall and articulation agreements for credit transfers between the state's four public technical institutes and the state universities.

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Harvey C. Jewett**Harvey C. Jewett****Location:****Appointed:****Appointed by:****Term expires:****Aberdeen****1997****Governor Janklow****2017**

Harvey C. Jewett, earned a B.A. and a J.D. from the University of South Dakota (USD). He is currently president and chief operating officer of The Rivett Group, L.L.C., a partner in the law firm of Siegel, Barnett, and Schutz. Jewett has served on the boards of the Education Assistance Corporation, Student Loan Finance Corporation, the USD Law School Foundation, Great Plains Education Foundation, Norwest Bank, South Dakota, Children's Home Society, and Super 8 Motels, Inc. He serves as chair of the Audit Committee of St. John's University and College of St. Benedict. Appointed in 1997 by Governor Janklow and reappointed by Governor Rounds in 2005, his term will expire in 2017.