

**ELECTION 2006: THE RECORD OF MIKE HATCH**  
*Populist's Pugnacious Style is Asset and Liability*  
*The Attorney General's Advocacy and Aggressive Political Tactics*  
*Have Won Him Enemies and Allies*

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Attorney General Mike Hatch calls himself "very much a populist."

"I'm cynical about many of the ways our government and our institutions operate in society," he said in a recent interview. "And in an era of passive-aggressive politicians, I do make decisions."

Populist battles have dominated the DFL gubernatorial nominee's eventful eight-year ride as Minnesota's top legal officer.

He won duels against U.S. Bancorp and Minnesota Public Radio over consumer privacy issues. He got a court to put restrictions on the Minnesota Partnership for Action Against Tobacco's advocacy of public smoking bans. He extracted concessions from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota over children's mental health coverage, from American Family Mutual Insurance over storm damage claims and from Allina Health Systems over the nonprofit medical giant's lavish executive expense accounts.

Hatch has had setbacks as well. He took on the federal government over Minnesota's relatively low Medicare reimbursement rates and lost.

He suffered an embarrassing defeat in a court challenge to his own handpicked Medica board of directors. Only this month, he lost, pending appeal, a skirmish with a Ramsey County judge he accused of bias, and he now faces ethics complaints filed by the judge and the state Republican chairman.

Hatch played key roles in a criminal case against then-Republican state chair Ron Eibensteiner, who ultimately was acquitted of arranging illegal campaign contributions from an insurance company facing state

regulatory penalties. Earlier, Hatch had stepped into the regulatory proceedings with efforts later branded as "confusing, deceptive and ultimately ineffective" by the state legislative auditor.

But Jim Bernstein, who as state commerce commissioner under Gov. Jesse Ventura also was involved in that insurance case, praised Hatch's involvement.

"Mike has a sharp eye for making sure companies play by the rules," said Bernstein, now a volunteer on the Hatch campaign. "Companies that did play by the rules never had any trouble from him."

### **Party leader, party rebel**

Hatch hit the statewide political stage at the age of 31 when he was elected state DFL chair as a compromise between the party's warring abortion factions. It was 1980, and the DFL was reeling after the 1978 election "massacre" - the loss of both U.S. Senate seats, the governor's office and the state House majority.

As he would do later as chief of two state government offices, Hatch cleaned house at DFL headquarters - mainly, he says, to bring in people who could operate the computers he introduced to the party's political arsenal. His fundraising also rescued DFL finances from deep debt and foreclosure on state party headquarters.

By 1982 the DFL had won back the House and the governorship. Hatch's reward was an appointment by Gov. Rudy Perpich to head the state Department of Commerce, where he built a reputation for consumer advocacy and toughness - critics say bullying - against the insurance, banking, securities and real estate industries his office regulated.

Early in 1990, Hatch made his long-assumed gubernatorial ambitions official, launching an intra-party challenge to Perpich, who called it "almost like a knife in the back." Hatch spoke out against domestic violence and in favor of welfare reform and abortion rights, but he largely campaigned as the un-Perpich at a time when the 2 1/2-term incumbent's popularity was sinking.

Perpich won the DFL endorsement and the primary election handily only to be unseated by Republican Arne Carlson in the general election, starting a DFL exile from the governor's office that continues to this day.

### **Abortion segue**

Hatch reached for the gubernatorial brass ring again in 1994, narrowly losing the primary election to DFL endorsee John Marty, who then was trounced by Carlson.

That fractious campaign solidified Hatch's image as a DFL renegade and it featured his remarkable segue from the abortion-rights alternative to Perpich to the favored DFL candidate of the anti-abortion Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life.

Hatch engineered the MCCL recommendation while continuing to claim his support for abortion rights.

The move led to angry denunciations from feminists, including a statement from Lisa Goodman, then head of Minnesota's National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League affiliate, that has lived on in Republican news releases: "I wonder if the MCCL, or the citizens of Minnesota, should trust him," she said.

Goodman, now a DFL Minneapolis City Council member, still offers a cool assessment of Hatch. "He was not pro-choice at that time," she said. "But people can change. He has a better pro-choice record than Tim Pawlenty."

Hatch says he has always stood somewhat in the middle on the nation's most persistent and vexing social issue, even as the ranks of DFL abortion opponents have thinned. "I have been troubled about abortion," he said. "But I do believe in a woman's right to choose."

This year, Hatch carries the endorsement of the pro-abortion-rights Planned Parenthood Minnesota Political Action Fund.

### **Wide-ranging positions**

On the third time Hatch defied a DFL endorsement, he won a public office - the one he holds today. Hitting hard on issues of health care access, he drubbed the party-endorsed Ember Reichgott Junge and former U.S. Attorney David Lillehaug in the 1998 primary election for attorney general, then defeated Republican Charlie Weaver in November.

He breezed to reelection in 2002, at last with the DFL's blessing, amassing a state-best vote total that gives him optimism this year. So does the past popularity of his running mate, Judi Dutcher, who was elected state auditor in 1998 as a Republican with the most votes among candidates for constitutional office.

"We figure between the two of us, everybody's voted for us once," Hatch said. "We've both had the same experience with political parties, too." (Dutcher left the GOP in 2000, saying the party was unfriendly to, among other things, her support of abortion rights.)

Unlike every Minnesota governor since 1971 except Ventura, Hatch never cast a vote in the Legislature before seeking the state's highest office. Still, Hatch has staked out a wide range of policy positions as attorney general and in his third run for governor.

After his victory over U.S. Bancorp, he pushed for sweeping privacy legislation, most of which was opposed by Republicans and failed to pass. About two-thirds of his policy proposals, including one for a state-managed discount prescription drug program, suffered similar defeats.

- He joined a successful bipartisan call for a law to allow parents to leave an unwanted newborn anonymously at any hospital.
- He pressed for measures to combat teenage prostitution, including funding for homeless youth shelters.
- After the Enron bankruptcy, he and the late U.S. Sen. Paul Wellstone jointly proposed new accountability standards for corporate boards, management and auditors.
- And after the death of college student Dru Sjodin at the hands of a released Minnesota sex offender, Hatch repeatedly criticized the Pawlenty administration's policies on civil commitment of sex offenders while touting his office's efforts to lock up dozens of alleged predators nearing the end of prison terms. He also took well-publicized action to stop the placement of sex offenders in nursing homes by state corrections officials.

Candidate Hatch has built his gubernatorial campaign around proposals to slash rising state college tuitions, restore cuts to local police and spend \$100 million in state money over 10 years on stem-cell research. All can be accomplished without raising taxes except on corporations with overseas operations, he says.

Despite his reputation for impulsiveness and a hot temper, Hatch says his political stands have been carefully developed. "I don't set a policy and change it on a 24-hour notice," he said. "I hold meetings, I talk to people."

But he acknowledged that his proposal on tuition, which has doubled in less than 10 years, is personal.

"I'm greatly offended by what we've done there," he said. "Previous governors, both Democratic and Republican, kept tuition low as a way for anyone to better themselves. This guy [Pawlenty] violated that trust. If you get the benefit of a University of Minnesota education, like he and I did, you have a duty to return the favor to the next generation."