

To someone like Al Quie, who had been a member of Congress for twenty years before becoming governor, the media were the fourth estate. He knew and respected the role of the media in being the eyes and ears of the public. And, I believe, he truly enjoyed reporters as human beings with families and lives that extended beyond their days in the subbasement of the State Capitol. This personal respect showed in his daily interactions with reporters.

Al Quie also believes the role of the media is to hold public officials accountable. He is a true public servant. In choosing a public life, he has accepted that the media would be a natural part of that career.

In the book *God Is My CEO* by Larry Julian, Quie tells the story about making his decision not to run for a second term as governor in 1982. Betty Wilson, *Minneapolis Tribune* capitol reporter, was a key individual in that account. She had asked for an interview to talk to the governor about his plans for re-election. As the governor wrestled with his decision, he kept putting off the interview. He knew he couldn't face her without knowing the real answer to her question. That week he was saved by a blizzard that cancelled the interview and gave him time to come to his decision not to run. When the storm cleared he went back to the capitol and faced the media with a clear conscience and an honest answer.

Finally, *grace*. This word was used by WCCO-TV capitol reporter Pat Kessler to describe Al Quie. It was grace that Kessler witnessed when Gov.

Al Quie took himself out of the race for re-election. Kessler saw that decision as one that was made for the good of the state, rather than for the governor's career.

It is the grace, openness, honesty, respect, and accountability that were the hallmarks of the Quie administration's relationship with the media—attributes that will serve any governor well in administrations to come.

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## **The Quie Legacy: Stronger Public Schools**

**Joe Nathan**

Without Governor Al Quie's leadership, Minnesota's pioneering public school choice laws might never have been adopted. At critical moments in the mid-1980s, Quie ignored partisanship and joined with Minnesota Governor Rudy Perpich, a Democrat, in promoting these ideas. Here's what happened.

- Early in January 1985, Governor Perpich proposed what came to be known as Post Secondary Options: allowing high school juniors and seniors to attend colleges and universities, with state funds following them, paying tuition, book, and lab fees.
- Open Enrollment: allowing students K-12 to move across district lines to attend public schools outside their district of residence, as long as the receiving

district school had room and the movement did not harm integration efforts

This was an enormously controversial proposal. No other state had given students and families these opportunities. Most of the major groups vigorously attacked the proposals. A newspaper poll done about a month after Governor Perpich first proposed these ideas found that 33 percent of Minnesotans favored these ideas, while 60 percent opposed them. Perpich found that although some members of his party supported his proposals, it was not going to be possible to move these ideas through the Minnesota Senate, which was controlled by the Democrats.

Governor Quie and House majority leader Connie Levi, both Republicans, stepped into this difficult situation. Republicans controlled the Minnesota House, so they could have a huge impact on legislation.

Both notified Governor Perpich that they supported his efforts. Levi made adoption of the Post-Secondary Options portion one of her highest 1985 legislative priorities.

Quie joined a group that Governor Perpich created to discuss his legislative proposals. Quie made many public statements explaining that he strongly supported Perpich's school choice recommendations. For more than year, Quie attended periodic meetings with this group, continuing to lend his insight—along with patient, diplomatic prodding—to the school choice proposals.

Quie used his considerable prestige to meet groups around the state, and to write newspaper columns explaining why public school choice would strengthen public education, and would be very helpful to many students.

Quie's involvement helped encourage a number of undecided Republican and Democratic legislators to support Post-Secondary Options and Open Enrollment. And Quie's strong record of supporting improvements in public education while in Congress helped convince some education groups that they should back away from their initial vigorous opposition to the school choice proposals. Quie and Levi easily could have stood aside as Perpich's proposals were attacked. With a majority of Minnesotans questioning Perpich's proposals, there was no political advantage to joining with him.

However, Quie and Levi decided the ideas were good, well worth supporting. Post Secondary Options was adopted in 1985, second chance choice laws in 1987, open enrollment in 1988, and the charter idea in 1991.

History has been kind to the vision and courage of these ideas. A poll conducted in early 2003 found that Minnesotans now strongly support these laws. By margins of between 2 and 3 to 1, Minnesotans endorsed the various choice laws, the laws that through leadership and bi-partisanship, Governor Al Quie helped make possible.

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