



# PROFILE: NORTH DAKOTA SENATE MAJORITY LEADER DAVID HOGUE

Joining the Senate 15 years ago after decades of military service, his belief in focusing on ‘policy, not personalities’ helps define his legislative, leadership style

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It didn't take long for David Hogue to get involved in one of the most important long-term decisions facing the North Dakota Legislative Assembly.

The year was 2009, Hogue was a first-year legislator, and his home state was just beginning to experience the Bakken oil boom.

What should North Dakota do with additional state revenue coming in from oil and gas taxes?

The year prior, voters had rejected the Legislative Assembly's plan to create an Oil Tax Trust Fund, and some veteran lawmakers took that as a signal not to pursue the idea again.

Hogue, though, believed the idea was too good to give up on: Take advantage of the Bakken boom to create a permanent source of revenue for future generations of North Dakotans. Not wanting his state to pass on the opportunity, he agreed to lead a conference committee that would take a second crack at establishing a constitutional trust fund.

"We went into committee, addressed some of the flaws and concerns of voters, and wrote what today is our Legacy Fund," Hogue says.

North Dakotans approved the plan one year later, ensuring that 30 percent of taxes from oil and gas exploration would be deposited into the fund and that the money could not be touched by the legislature until 2017. Now, in any given biennium, no more than 15 percent of the fund's principal can be drawn down by the legislature, and any such spending requires a two-thirds vote in the House and Senate.

"That fund's value is now approaching \$10 billion," Hogue says.

Quite a legacy indeed.

He also says that early experience in office taught him enduring lessons about the legislative process, particularly the value of lawmakers being committed to working through differences and hearing multiple perspectives via a deliberative committee process.

"That's where the people's work gets done," Hogue says.

One of his goals now as a leader is to foster that kind of atmosphere.

Not long after joining the Senate, Hogue began holding leadership positions in the 47-member chamber, and after the elections of 2022, his colleagues chose him as majority leader.

He has now spent well over a decade in the legislature, and Hogue's service to his state and country dates back much further. As a young man, he enlisted for six years in the U.S. Army Reserves; next, he joined the North Dakota National Guard.

"I figured I would be with the Guard



David Hogue's military and public service has taken him around the world, and last year, it took him to center stage at the North Dakota State Fair. He and other state leaders showed livestock at the fair under the tutelage of award-winning 4-H youths. Hogue (second from right) is pictured here holding his victory banner — "Grand Champion Sheep Showman."

## BIO-SKETCH: NORTH DAKOTA SENATOR DAVID HOGUE

- ✓ chosen Senate majority leader in late 2022
- ✓ previously held posts of majority caucus leader and Senate president pro tempore
- ✓ has been a member of the North Dakota Senate since 2009
- ✓ devoted many years to military service, including in the U.S. Army Reserves and 25 years in the North Dakota National Guard, where he served a tour of duty in Afghanistan and retired with the rank of colonel
- ✓ is a lawyer in private practice at the firm Pringle & Herigstad, P.C.
- ✓ is a graduate of the North Dakota School of Law who once served as a law clerk for the then-chief justice of the state Supreme Court
- ✓ he and his wife, Paula, have two children: Marshall and Megan

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for another six years, but the thing of it is, I enjoyed it so much and thought it was such a fantastic organization that I ended up serving for 25 years," says Hogue, who was deployed to Afghanistan in the mid-2000s.

He retired as colonel in 2009, the same year he joined the Legislative Assembly. All the while, he also has been an attorney working in private practice.

In an interview with CSG Midwest, Hogue discussed his views on legislating and leadership. Here are excerpts.

**Q** You've been in the Senate for 15 years. Based on your observations over that time, what makes for an effective legislator?

**A** I honestly think the most effective legislators are the ones who go about their work quietly. You won't see their names often on bills, but they're encouraging others and providing the sort of collateral support that just about every bill needs. Those are the people who are making things happen. You can get a lot done if you're not worried about who gets the credit.

**Q** You've talked about the value of deliberative policymaking. How do you try to prioritize that as a leader?

**A** One way is to make sure, as legislators and as leaders, that

we're squarely focused on the actual policy, not the personalities. Sometimes those two things can get commingled, and we want to try and avoid that.

Things go pretty fast here in North Dakota. We have only an 80-day session to get things done. That means long hours; sometimes it's going to get contentious. But if we stay focused on the policy, I've always found it to be helpful.

**Q** You're leading a large, supermajority caucus, 43 members from across the state who fall along different parts of the political spectrum. How do you go about managing differences?

**A** Number one, make it clear that we will always expect to have respectful, civil discourse. Part of that goes back to not personalizing our differences on policy.

The other thing we try to do, as a caucus, is meet informally, off the Capitol grounds, where we can gather in a social setting, have discussions about our differences, and just sort of see where everybody's at. We want to get to a place where everybody has respect for the fact that we're not always going to agree, and let the votes fall where they do.

**Q** What are some leadership strategies that you've found to be effective?

**A** All of our caucus members are passionate about issues; that's why they got involved. So I try to leverage that. Encourage and empower them to become opinion leaders in the areas where their passions lie.

I have tasked them with being the caucus leader on that particular issue. I think that encourages them to be as informed as they can and to keep us informed as a caucus and as a legislature. That helps make good policy.

**Q** Your state takes pride in having a "citizen legislature." You meet in session for only 80 days, once every two years. Are you a believer in having that kind of part-time legislature?

**A** Yeah, I'm a big-time believer in it. One of the things, with that 80-day constitutional limit put in place by our founders, it's like anything else — having that kind of deadline tends to concentrate the mind well.

If you don't give people or legislative assemblies deadlines, you tend to get more wrangling, I think, maybe more partisanship and divisiveness.

It's not that we're not political, but I don't think nearly as much as other legislative bodies where it's your job, it's your livelihood. In that situation, I think there is a greater chance of you spending an inordinate amount of time focused on politics.