

EDITORIAL

Empty promise from Creighton

In the 2000 Republican primary, Tom Creighton -- in an apparent attempt to separate himself from a crowded field in the 37th Legislative District contest -- said he would decline to accept a state pension if he were around long enough to qualify for one.

The pledge was reflective of Creighton's strongly held conservative views on such issues as government spending, farm preservation, education, tax reform and rights of the unborn. His views are shared by many Lancaster countians.

Creighton, of Rapho Township, won the GOP nod that year, and went on to easily defeat his Democratic opponent in the fall. He was elected time and again, becoming the current Lancaster County delegation's longest-serving member, winning six two-year terms.

During his time in office, Creighton was considered one of the most conservative House members. He rose relatively quickly through the ranks, becoming chairman of the influential House Local Government Committee in 2010.

There were missteps, most notably his initial support for the infamous middle-of-the-night pay raise that lawmakers gave themselves in 2005. Creighton later apologized for his vote, and the raise was rescinded.

Creighton also voted to give himself and other lawmakers a 50 percent hike in their pensions (25 percent for teachers and other public employees) in 2001.

In 2007, Creighton made an about-face, saying he would scrap legislators' lucrative pension plan and replace it with a 401(k) plan, which is widely used in the private sector.

On the campaign trail in 2010, Creighton was critical of his Democratic opponent, a retired schoolteacher, who potentially could have collected a second public pension if he had won and served long enough.

But now, Creighton says he will accept the state pension -- about \$30,000 a year -- that he once urged colleagues to abolish. This, along with taxpayer-paid medical coverage for life.

"I don't have a good explanation (for the change of heart)," the 67-year-old Creighton says.

That's because there isn't one.

Creighton is fulfilling one pledge in stepping down after six terms. But that's not what many of his constituents will remember. They will remember him as just another politician who will say anything to get elected.

Creighton isn't the first politician to renege on a campaign promise. He won't be the last.

But each time it happens, politicians and politics are diminished further in the eyes of the public.

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