

NEWS UPDATE

Former Gov. Atiyeh feels 'so much better' after surgery

Background: Last year, former Gov. Vic Atiyeh suffered a mild heart attack and underwent quadruple bypass surgery. He checked back into Providence St. Vincent Medical Center three more times after the surgery for tests as he worked to regain his health.

Update: The 83-year-old Republican says he feels "so much better" since the surgery to repair his heart. There have been no return trips to the hospital. His life has slowed down, Atiyeh said, but he remains active, visiting his downtown office most days, continuing to serve on the board of The Greenbrier Cos. — the Lake Oswego freight railcar firm — and keeping track of his five grandchildren.

"I come to work early, I push paper, and I leave early," he said.

Asked what he did on the night of Election Day, he said, "I went to bed."

The former governor may have slept through election returns, but he retains a keen interest in state politics. Atiyeh, who left office in 1987 after serving two terms, is Or-



DANA E. OLSEN/THE OREGONIAN

Former Gov. Vic Atiyeh greets former Gov. Barbara Roberts at a building dedication in March in Salem.

gon's last Republican governor, a distinction he had hoped to shed this year.

He said he was "quite disappointed" that Republican candidate Ron Saxton did not win the gubernatorial contest but was pleased that voters were "very responsible" in how they reacted to

the ballot measures they had to sort through.

Saxton "did a very good job," Atiyeh said, "but it was tough on two counts: He was running against an incumbent Democrat, and then there was the national scene with the war in Iraq, which was bad news for the Republi-

cans." Four years from now, Atiyeh noted, the GOP will not face an incumbent because Gov. Ted Kulongoski is barred from seeking a third consecutive term.

"We've got a shot when we've got an open seat," he said.

Since he left office, Atiyeh has worked as an international trade consultant, but he does not confine himself to trade matters. "Hopefully, people call from time to time and ask for advice," he said. "It's all free."

What's next: Atiyeh said he would like to vacation in Hawaii when his wife, Dolores, is fully recovered from knee replacement surgery. But his plans do not include retirement. He said his wife has asked him when he plans to retire and he has replied, "I don't think I can do that."

"I just plan to keep going as long as my body allows," Atiyeh said. "I'm in a lot better shape than I was."

— Edward Walsh

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