

Statehouse sidelights . . .

1 percent solution — more delay or repeal?

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As the financial screws tighten on state and local government, it is not surprising to read and hear remarks from high government officials that the 1 Percent limit should be delayed, and a few hardy souls are even suggesting outright repeal.

It's still too early to predict that such a course should be taken because it is only fair the proposal be given an opportunity to perform. If it doesn't, the mood of the people will undoubtedly influence them to junk the initiative about as rapidly as they voted for it in the first place.

Almost daily there are news stories of how cities, counties and school districts are raising fees, cutting programs and personnel, and taking other economy moves to cope with the shrinking revenue brought about by the 1 Percent.

Only last week a legislative committee at Boise studied a proposal to delay implementing the 1 Percent limit for one or two years. This suggestion would have been unheard of a few months ago.

The delay was proposed by an advisory committee of city and county officials who claim the 1 Percent limit will wreck havoc on local government.

The 1 Percent limit is scheduled to go into effect Jan. 1, 1980, but the advisory committees said the date should be pushed back while property taxes are frozen at 1978 levels.

Members of the Legislative Council Committee on Taxation asserted that the delay and continued freeze on property tax rates at the 1978 levels would accomplish almost everything the 1 Percent limit would do without causing chaos.

Charles Moss, Pocatello city manager, and a committee member, explained the delay would allow county assessor to complete their re-valuation of property, and this is indeed a valid point.

State Rep. Steve Antone, R-Rupert, chairman of the tax committee and also of the House Revenue and Taxation Committee, said he wasn't prepared to take action on the proposal until further study is completed.

He expressed doubt that such a delay in the tax limit would be approved by the Legislature.

The Post-Register

The political pulse

Idaho Falls, Idaho, Sunday, Sept. 30, 1979

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Werner Brammer, Kendrick, the new president of the Idaho Property Owners Association, as can be expected, screamed the delay proposal "is one of selling the voters of the state down the river."

He charged the recommendations are "really an outright repeal of the 1 percent initiative."

He added "The committee advisers have a vested interest in the property tax because they are on the government payroll and must be foes of the 1 percent. He added some local government officials hope to delay the tax limit in hopes the public will forget about it."

The initiative, however, is on the books and must be followed. It's a creature of the Legislature to do with it as it wants but its main purposes must be carried out — or at least should be.

As was predicted earlier, even before the initiative was approved by a 58 percent majority, most people will regret their action and talk of repeal will increase, probably as early as 1980.

Sen. Vearl Crystal, R-Rigby, who had a key hand in seeking to implement the 1 Percent Initiative and did a good job considering the information the legislators had available, told the Idaho Falls League of Women Voters in a meeting this week that a local option income tax is proposed to help cities.

Crystal was member of a special subcommittee, along with Rep. Morgan Munger, R-

Ola, which drafted House Bill 166, the key measure to implement the 1 Percent Initiative.

Crystal acknowledged the cities are caught the worst of all local taxing units in the financial squeeze brought about by the 1 Percent.

He disclosed that Sen. Lester Clemm, D-Troy, and Brammer plan sponsoring a bill that calls for a local option income tax surcharge. It would be collected by the state and then be dis-

tributed back to local taxing districts.

Crystal must know that such a tax would meet violent opposition. Perhaps local liquor, motel or other taxes would be helpful.

Ammon Mayor George Wehmann, president of the Association of Idaho cities, suggested a simple solution. Just let the cities have the estimated \$22 million in additional money in 1980, he said.

Both proposals, however, have slim chances of passage.