

# Hammond stresses conservative leader role

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Rep. Melvin Hammond, D-Rexburg, who becomes the new House minority leader after a six-year absence, will emphasize his conservative philosophy in carrying out his duties as the loyal opposition when the Idaho Legislature convenes Jan. 12.

Hammond, who served as minority leader for two years, returns to head the Democrats after he was ousted in 1974 by Rep. Patricia McDermott, D-Pocatello. He also served as the assistant minority leader for two years before that.

After the Democrats took such a lacing in the November election, he decided to return to his former spot and won by two votes, 8-6, in a close contest with Miss McDermott at the reorganization session early this month.

Hammond sounded the theme that his well known conservative approach would go over much better for the Democrats working with the Republican than the Pocatello legislator, considered one of the most, if not the most, liberal lawmaker in the House.

While Miss McDermott, an attorney, is brilliant but often abrasive in floor debate, Hammond uses a more calm, if not less spectacular approach in his floor arguments. It perhaps epitomizes the shift from liberal-moderate to conservative trend about as well as anything.

Hammond, a religious instructor at Ricks College, has served six terms in the House, or 12 years, and is near the top in seniority among the Democrats.

## Water meeting

BOISE — The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare will hold a public meeting Jan. 7 in Boise to give Idahoans a chance to comment on the annual update of the Idaho Water Quality Management Plan.

Officials explained the plan is required to be submitted yearly to the Policy Advisory Committee of the Idaho Clean Water Program and a public meeting is held to gain public input.

The Democrats are badly outvoted by the Republicans 56-14, perhaps the widest margin in Idaho's history and a drop of six seats from the previous session.

The situation, however, is not as lopsided as the numbers indicate because the Republicans appear split in three factions — the right, moderates and the conservatives.

"I can tell you this, we aren't going to play dead," Hammond said.

He notes it will not be difficult for the Democrats to join the moderates and the less rigid conservative Republicans on most issues.

The widest criticism against Miss McDermott and which probably lost her the leadership was her frequent tardiness and absenteeism to caucus and committee meetings, and also to some extent, in the general sessions,

Hammond, like most legisla-

tors, believes the budget freeze should be expanded but has no specific plans for further implementing the 1 Percent Tax Initiative; is against a general fund tax increase, such as sales and income; believes some tax relief can be granted with the revenue available, such as the senior citizen circuit breaker and homeowners exemption; and feels a budget of about \$440 million will be possible on basis of revenue expectations.

He feels something has to be done about increased highway funding, such as hikes in the state gas tax and registration fees, noting this funding has particularly benefitted his area where a four-lane highway, Freeway 20, is being built north of Idaho Falls to the Montana line.

He says he has empathy with Lewis and Clark State College as he is a professor at Ricks and

agrees there should be some consolidation but no shutdown of Lewis and Clark.

Although an educator, Hammond realizes that not much of an increase can be given public schools but to allocate whatever is available; perhaps an 8 percent salary increase to state employees; some reasonable increase in local option tax powers and other authority to cities; some legislation to improve Fish and Game Department administration and also takes a dim view for increasing fish and game fees.

He also deviates from the views of most Democrats and opposes a full-fledged Department of Energy as not necessary at this time; has mixed feelings

about the Sagebrush Rebellion but would need to see such a bill as to whether he would support it; and strongly supports a Right to Work Law but doesn't believe in compulsory arbitration.

He expresses some concern as to whether there is proper licensing for day care centers and shelter homes.

Although having no strong feeling regarding election laws and party convention system, he said he prefers a primary being held in the fall, possibly in early September.

But for the first time in years — 1974 to be exact — he eagerly awaits the start of the Legislature when he can have a leading hand in shaping legislation and policies.



House Minority Leader  
Melvin Hammond