

Legislative limelights . . .

Legislature in no mood for new taxes, laws

Wednesday

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The legislative breakfast of the League of Women Voters and the American Association of University Women last week indicated all too graphically that the Idaho Legislature is not going to be in any mood for increased spending or new legislation.

The eight Idaho Falls area legislators who attended this breakfast generally represent the thinking of the conservative legislators and right now that dominates the state's political philosophy.

When Idahoans voted for the 1 Percent Tax Initiative in 1978 it was done primarily with the idea of reducing or at least preventing the sharp rise of property taxes.

Idaho's lawmakers in the last session and in views expressed for the 1980 session, to convene next month, appear to be going far beyond this premise.

It's unfortunate, but they have adopted an attitude not only of curtailing funding whether it comes from the property tax or any tax but they are leaning backwards to hold budget increases to a minimum.

Many key legislators admit frankly they don't want to take progressive steps. They point out the majority of the people (58 percent) voted for the property tax restrictions and now (the people) should pay the penalty. They feel they don't have to bail them out of the present predicament.

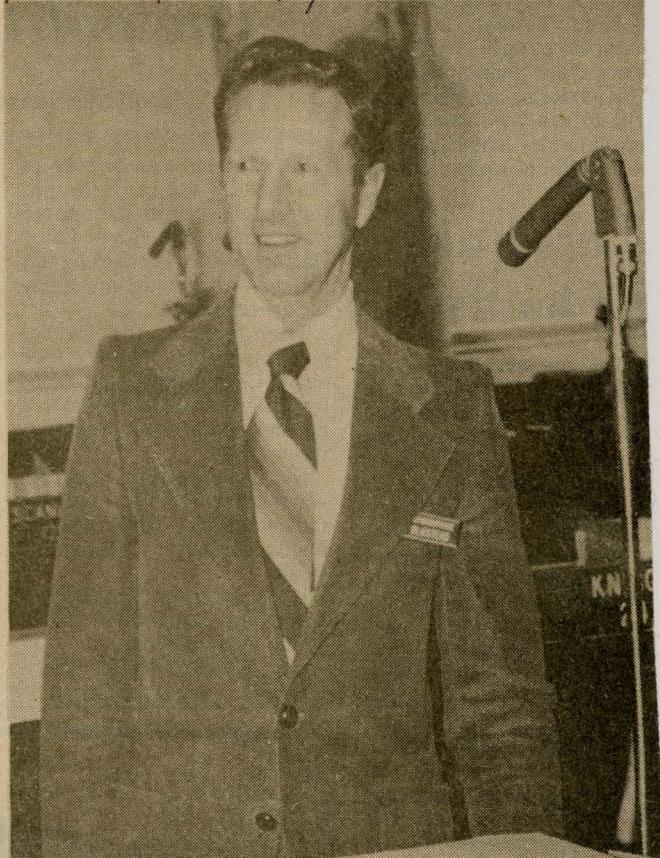
This is taking a short sighted view that can lead to serious reductions in many state services and programs. It also means those with less political influence will suffer — the poor, sick, aged and the mentally and physically handicapped.

As observed previously, the state government will have enough money for basic essential services while the cities, counties and school districts will need to struggle as best as they can.

This mood, unfortunately, also prevails for consideration of new legislation.

The Idaho Falls area legislators predicted, for example, day-care licensing, Certificate of Need, new gas tax and vehicle registration hikes, women and various health and welfare programs face bleak futures.

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Post-Register photo

Ready with gavel

BOISE — House Speaker Ralph Olmstead, R-Twin Falls, is ready to wield the gavel when the Second Regular Session of the 45th Idaho Legislature convenes Jan. 7. Preliminary legislators' views indicate the session will produce only the bare minimum in legislation.

As observed previously, any beneficial legislation for cities, counties and school districts will be a surprise.

The school districts can vote for override levies, plant facility funds and bonds but the cities are restricted.

The primary function of counties is merely to provide administration of courthouse

offices, law enforcement and roads. In most cases these can be held to bare minimum, county law enforcement is generally of poor quality anyway and fortunately in the larger counties is handled by the more efficient city police.

As this trend continues and even expands the property tax restrictive, avid proponents will find they have a tiger by the tail.

Even now they are keeping a low profile as services on all levels — except federal — deteriorates. They are now blamed for this debacle.

The time hasn't arrived yet but it's coming.

In maybe another one, two, or three years, Idaho citizens may take action that may repeal the 1 percent or enact something more sensible.

Despite its shortcomings, the Legislature had done a good job in providing services and holding down taxes. It still can.

Evans to reveal budget Dec. 20

BOISE — Gov. John V. Evans announced he would deliver his annual budget message Dec. 20, nearly three weeks ahead of the start of the Idaho Legislature.

His talk will be given at 6:30 p.m. over live television and radio state network.

Reports indicate Evans will propose about a \$400 million budget, more than a 10 percent jump from the \$357.5 million earmarked for the current year.