

East Idaho solons followed conservative voting trend

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Eastern Idaho legislators with few exceptions followed a conservative trend in voting for legislation in the 1981 Legislature, similar to the statewide pattern.

A compilation showed the most progressive voting was carried out by the two Democrats on the 18-member eastern Idaho delegation, Sen. Israel Merrill, Blackfoot, and Rep. Melvin Hammond, House minority leader, and a Republican, Rep. Elaine Kearns, Idaho Falls.

However, also voting for increased funding for education and health were Reps. Linden B. Bateman, R-Idaho Falls, John O. Sessions, R-Driggs, and at times, Martin Trillhaase, R-Idaho Falls.

Sen. Dane Watkins, R-Idaho Falls also favored some education hikes.

Others included in the voting who showed balloting for stringent budget appropriations and a general no-growth philosophy were Sens. J. Marsden Williams and William L. Floyd, both of Idaho Falls; Vearl Crystal, Rigby, and Mark G. Ricks, Rexburg; and Reps. Kurt L. Johnson and Gary L. Paxman, both of Idaho Falls; Ray E. Infanger, Salmon; Wayne E. Tibbitts, Rigby; Rich Orme, St. Anthony; and Darwin Young and Raymond Parks, Blackfoot.

Of these, Johnson, Paxman, Parks and Infanger were generally the most reactionary in their voting.

They contended that's what most people want.

In the Joint Finance Appropriation Committee, of which Watkins,

Ricks, Crystal, Infanger and Merrill are members, voted for lower major appropriations than those recommended by the governor in all cases, except Merrill.

For example, they all voted to fund only nine fulltime employees and contracting out for services for substance abuse services, deleting public employee merit increases, and eliminating 70 regional managers and reduced central offices for DHW.

However, they voted for 40 fulltime Aid to Dependent Children eligibility investigators to reduce welfare abuse. This was a flipflop from two years ago when the Legislature eliminated funding for eight investigators but found welfare abuse escalated abruptly and it cost the state far more in the losses incurred.

Ricks did present a motion to increase public school funding from \$195 million to \$200 million and was supported by Crystal and Watkins but it failed in the JFAC by a 11-9 vote.

Crystal voted in favor of an increase to \$12,297,600 for agricultural

research and it passed 11-9, with Watkins, Ricks and Infanger opposed.

All voted for \$77,311,600 higher education which deleted public television funding, except Watkins and Merrill.

Some of the key votes on bills follow:

SB1019, as amended, to recodify the Mental Health Commitment Act, passed both houses with Ricks, Williams and Tibbitts absent, and Bateman and Infanger voting nay.

SB1033, licensing intermediate care facilities for mentally retarded, passed with all area legislators in favor.

SB1206, prohibiting assistance payments to those who dispose of real property to qualify for welfare, passed, with Tibbitts voting nay and Hammond absent.

SB1207, indirect support service programs appropriation, passed, with Hammond, Johnson, Kearnes and Sessions voting nay because too low.

SB1208, water quality and hazardous materials programs appropriation, passed with Bateman, Hammond and Kearns in opposition because too low.

SB1211, Division of Community Rehabilitation appropriation, passed, with Hammond and Kearnes in opposition because too low.

HB187, eliminating longevity credits for state employees, passed but vetoed by governor, with only Kearns and Hammond voting nay.

HB188, as amended, personnel commission to adopt a reduction-

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in-force rule, passed, with Bateman, Hammond, Sessions and Trillhaase voting in favor, and Floyd absent.

HB355, supplemental appropriation for Medical Assistance Payments program, passed, with Bateman, Kearns and Trillhaase voting nay because too low.

HB409, appropriation for eligibility service, medical assistance and others, passed, with Hammond, Kearns and Sessions voting nay because insufficient amount.

Voting on some key education bills showed:

SB1126, exempt teachers and employees of private schools from state certification, passed but vetoed by governor, with Hammond and Kearns absent.

HB364, public school appropriation, passed with Bateman, Hammond, Kearns and Watkins voting nay because too low.

HB427, Higher education appropriation passed, with Bateman, Hammond and Kearns in opposition because too low.

Sagebrush Rebellion, with all voting in favor except Kearns and Merrill.

The Idaho Education Association, for example, rated legislators on they way they voted on key legislative issues.

The two Democrats, as expected, were near the top with Merrill at 88 percent and Hammond at 86 percent. Of the Republicans, Kearns led with 64 percent, with Bateman and Trillhaase at 57.

All other East Idaho legislators were below 50, with the lowest, Crystal at 22, Ricks and Williams each at 33, Parks at 23, Young at 29, Johnson and Paxman, each at 21. Johnson is chairman of the House Education Committee.

The Idaho Conservation League also placed most East Idaho legislators at the bottom bracket on environmental issues.

As usual, rating near the top were Merrill with 92 percent; Kearns 77 percent and Hammond 75 percent. Young was at 50 percent but all the others were below 50, with the lowest, Crystal, at 15 percent.

HB6, Right-To-Work law, was favored by all eastern Idaho legislators except Merrill. It even included the only East Idaho House Democrat, Hammond. It passed the House 49-21 but was tabled in the Senate 20-15.

All the three-package bills providing for \$17.8 million state highway funding additional by raising the state gas tax 2 cents per gallon and vehicle and truck gross ton tax 21 percent was supported generally by all East Idaho legislators. Mrs. Kearns, Orme and Trillhaase voted against the vehicle license hikes but supported the two other measures.

HCR 24, which granted a 7 percent increase to state public employees, was passed in both chambers. Voting against it because of insufficient funding that will bring personnel cutbacks were Hammond, Paxman, and Sessions, with Merrill absent.

The Daily Data, which gives the disposition of all bills and the voting record of all legislators on those measures were advanced to the floor may be seen in the newsroom of The Post-Register. It showed 701 bills and 80 resolutions and memorials introduced, for total of 701. Of these 381 bills and 43 resolutions and memorials were approved, total of 423. The Senate introduced 238 bills, the House almost twice as many, 468.