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The political pulse

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The school scene . . .

Initiative doesn't ease school taxation

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Passage by Idaho Falls District 91 patrons of the \$1.47 million levy a week ago points up how the 1 Percent Tax Initiative has failed to ease the local school property tax.

This initiative, as has been stated repeatedly, duped the small property owner because it mostly helps the private utilities, big corporations and those with income producing revenue, such as apartment and condominium owners.

It left the average home owner, small businessman and farmer without significant relief, but in fact added to his burden in the way of higher fees for many school, county and city services.

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State School Supt. Jerry Evans reported the special maintenance and operation levies in the state increased last year. From all indications, they also will jump in the coming year which should tell the school patrons something.

Evans reported for the 1981-82 school year, 37 school districts, or a third of the 115 in the state, passed special levies totaling \$11,577,919. This was an increase from the 39 school districts passing \$9,316,190 the previous year.

The faithful Idaho Falls patrons passed their \$1.45 million levy last week by a 2,523 to 799 margin, or 76 percent. This was better than the passage of \$1.36 million levy approved by 69.9 percent last year. Last year and likely this



Jerry Evans
State School Supt.

year, Idaho Falls passed one of the largest levies in the state. Last year it was second only to Moscow which approved \$1.6 million levy.

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The Associated Taxpayers of Idaho which actually represents the big corporations, recently boasted the 1 Percent Tax Initiative is working, showing how the property tax has been restricted. What it didn't say was the fact the property tax was reduced for the private utilities and large corporations while the small property owner struggled to make up the loss.

Ken Robison, a former state senator from Boise, who is spearheading the Residential Tax Initiative, bares the sorry property tax situation that is stacked against residential taxpayers.

Robison has obtained about 10,000 signatures of the 29,000 needed by the deadline of July 2 to place this excellent initiative on the Nov. 2 general election ballot.

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Robison, who has made an intensive study of the Idaho tax structure and is considered by legislators as extremely knowledgeable, said that unless the initiative is enacted, taxes on homes will continue to rise much faster than the rate of increase in total property tax.

Since 1970, taxes on homes have risen three times as fast as total property taxes. Since 1976, residential taxes have risen \$54 million while the total for non-residential property has not increased, he has found out.

Robison said projections indicate that without the initiative, taxes on residential property in Idaho will rise \$4.5 million per year more than they should over the next several years. Residential taxes will continue to go up 100 percent, or nearly 100 percent, of all future property tax increases.