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The political pulse

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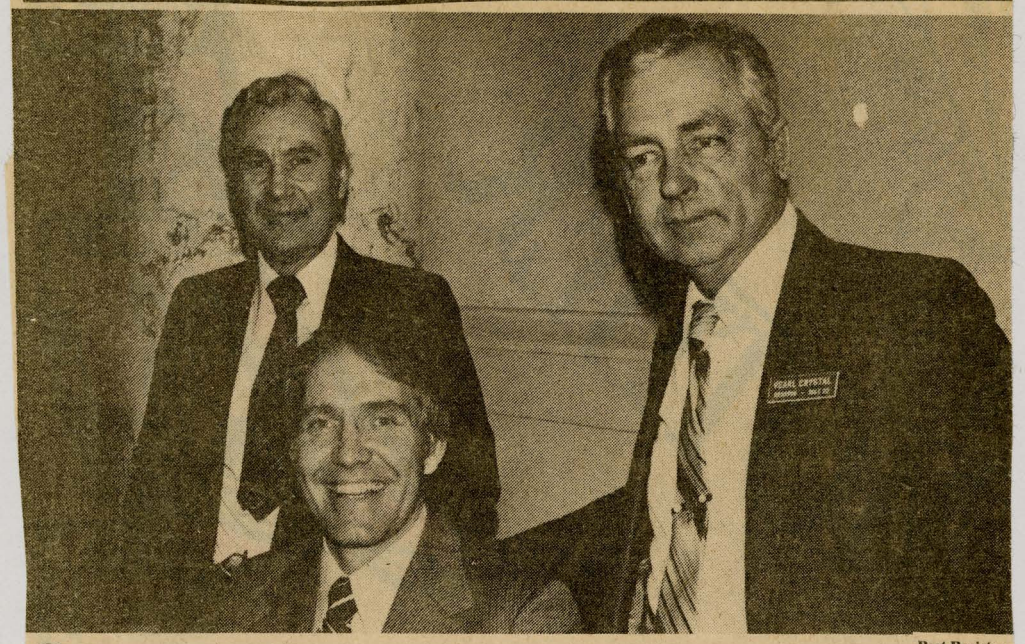

Post-Register

Conservative senators

BOISE — East Idaho state senators seated together on the right side looking from the podium are from left, J. Marsden Williams and Dane Watkins, both of Idaho Falls, and Vearl C.Crystal, all Republicans. They are considered among the mot conservative in the Legislature.

Sen. Crystal says initiative implementation to cut taxes

BY BEN J. PLASTINO
Post-Register political editor

RIGBY - Sen. Vearl C. Crystal, R-Rigby, who carried the 1 percent tax initiative implementation in the Idaho Senate for successful passage, contended Wednesday the average tax levy in the state will drop.

He explained the average tax levy in the state is now .797 percent, but that provisions of the new implementation law, House Bill 389, will bring a drop to about .778 percent.

"This could mean that some taxpayers will get a reduction in their 1981 property taxes," said Crystal, who is a former longtime Jefferson County assessor and who served on the original special committee to implement the tax initiative.

Crystal noted there has been much criticism of the State Legislature on the new bill, especially from the Idaho Property Owners Association, the original sponsors of the 1 percent initiative.

"The most controversial provision of HB 389 was the repeal of the annual 2 percent cap on valuations," said Crystal. "Contrary to the belief of the original supporters of the 1 percent initiative, that portion of the law did not by itself control tax spending."

Crystal then explained the following points for each section of the new law:

- The appraisal process, which the 1 percent initiative law attempted to arbitarily regulate, is nothing more than a means of distributing the cost of local govenment. The appraisal process is performed statutorily by the county assessor in each county. Tax spending or taxes certified against property to finance adopted budgets of local taxing districts are a product of decisions made by the elected officials of a taxing district.
- In addition to being presumed unconstitutional and totally unfair, arbitrarily requiring annual distribution of the cost of government in proportion to the existence of proprty wealth in 1978 did nothing to control or limit the ability of governments to certify charges aganst property.
- HB389 limits the ability of governments to finance spending, by charges against property, to the greater of no more than 105 percent of the previous year's certification for operating purposes, or an amount equal to applying the current year's levy for operating purposes against 50 percent of the increase in assessable market value of the ensuing year. This section recognizes that the presence of, or the need for, government varies among areas. For that reason a maximum tax rate of 1 percent is not necessarily coincident with citizen desire for government.
- This provision responds to taxpayer desire obviously inherent in the 1 percent initiative to statutorily limit government's ability to certify taxes against property. Once the cost of government borne by property taxes is established within this process of limitation, HB 389 allows that cost of government to be distributed in proportion to the actual or current economic relationship one property has to another.