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Legislative limelights...

Probable huge surplus justifies Evans stand

BY BEN J. PLASTINO

Post-Register political editor

The report by the state's chief economist that the state's general fund surplus will reach at least \$16 million by the end of 1981 fiscal year and attain \$440 million revenue by the end of the 1982 fiscal year justifies the governor's earlier optimistic outlook.

It gives weight to his argument that the Republican controlled Legislature unnecessarily cut vital programs for the coming fiscal year.

The Legislature Revenue Projection Committee thus put the entire state's financial program in a quandary when it predicted the revenue for the end of the 1981 fiscal year ending June 30 will reach only \$377 million, and not more than \$380 million at the most.

This same committee also projected only \$422 million revenue for the 1982 fiscal year and that's exactly what the Legislature approved for the budget.

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Richard Slaughter, chief economist for the Division of Financial Management under the Office of the Governor, reports the state's general fund will settle between \$393 million and \$394 million, which is well above the \$377 million the Idaho Legislative Revenue Projection Committee had projected. The committee later revised its figure to indicated it could go as high as \$380 million.

More serious is the 1982 fiscal year revenue projection which the Legislature slashed from the governor's recommendation of \$440 million to \$422 million. As a result, many valuable programs were drastically reduced or eliminated altogether unnecessarily. This is a disservice to the people of Idaho.

The legislative leadership can't be faulted entirely as it had a point in declaring it is better to view a conservative budget, rather than risk deficits as was the case in the 1981 budget. It can be sharply criticized, however, for refusing to waver from its rigid stand and acknowledged there were signs the revenue outlook was on the upswing.

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Gov. John V. Evans' statements that he plans to include no request for supplemental funding in the special session beginning July 7, primarily to handle congressional and legislative reapportionment, must be viewed with skepticism.

It would appear Evans wants the requests to come from other sources, thus placing the burden on the Legislature for adding new items. There is little question that supplemental funding will be asked for some agencies handling education, judicial, health and welfare, air and water quality management, and others.

Many of these cuts appeared politically inspired as they were in the fields of air and water quality management, Office of Energy, Office of Aging, women's commission, welfare and environment and others which the Republican leadership has consistently opposed, rather than across the board.

Even this early in the campaign, the financial aspects give the governor a strong argument against his Republican adversaries, charging their legislative performances were something less than commendable. The people wanted cuts in government spending but they also expect essential service. The crux then settles on what is essential.