

Legislative limelights

Keen contests loom for committee spots

By BEN J. PLASTINO

Post-Register political editor

Although contests for legislative leadership grab the most headlines, the election of committee chairmanships and appointments to key committees also carry considerable weight.

Most of the present committee chairmen are expected to be re-elected without opposition but there are a number of vacancies because some legislators are not seeking re-election, a few were defeated and others may want leadership or other committee assignments.

Also a large crop of freshmen will be seeking key committee assignments and their votes for contested races for House speakership or Senate president pro tem will determine if they get them. New are some 20 state representatives and eight state senators.

The Senate president pro tem and House speaker have the exclusive power of appointments of chairmen and committee assignments in their respective chambers, although they generally confer with the other legislative leaders.

There are chairmanship vacancies in three Senate committees and two House committees but present committee chairmen seeking leadership slots could open up at least three more Senate committee chairmanships and two in the House. There are nine standing committees in the Senate and 13 in the House.

Aside from those holding leadership positions, most senators are given two committees assignments and most House members are assigned three committee. Each is allotted a position on what is considered one major committee and one or two minor committees.

There are Republican contests for Senate president pro tem and House speaker but top Democrats are unopposed. They include Sen. Kermit Kiebert, D-Hope, to vault from assis-

tant Senate minority leader to minority leader, and Rep. Melvin Hammond, D-Rexburg, to be re-elected House minority leader after Rep. Patricia McDermott, D-Pocatello, told this writer she would not challenge Hammond after earlier hinting she might.

Committee chairmanship vacancies exist in the Senate in Judiciary, State Affairs and Transportation, and in the House in Health and Welfare and State Affairs because of election defeats or incumbents not seeking re-election.

Republicans control both chambers, 51-19 in the House and 21-14 in the Senate.

In the Senate, committee chairmen defeated for re-election were Sen. Edith Klein, R-Boise, Judiciary, and Sen. Leon Swenson, R-Nampa, State Affairs, while Sen. Dean Abraham, R-Nampa, Transportation, did not seek re-election.

In the House, committee chairmen not seeking re-election were Rep. Elaine Kearnes, R-Idaho Falls, Health and Welfare, and Rep. George Danielson, R-Cambridge, State Affairs.

Other committee chairmanship vacancies may result in the Senate because Sens. Mark G. Ricks, R-Rexburg, Commerce and Labor; Sen. Dane Watkins, R-Idaho Falls, Local Government and Taxation; and Sen. J. Marsden Williams, R-Idaho Falls, Natural Resources, are mentioned as possible candidates for majority leader or assistant majority leaders.

In the House, committee chairmanships may open because Reps. Tom W. Stivers, R-Twin Falls, Judiciary, and Steve Antone, R-Rupert, Revenue and Taxation, are announced contests for speakership.

In any event, there are certain to be a number of changes in leadership, committee chairmanships and committee assignments.

Higher legislative pay recommended

By BEN J. PLASTINO
Post-Register political editor

The Idaho legislative Compensation Committee has recommended legislative salaries to remain about the same but for an increase in expenses from \$44 to 60 per day, Ray W. Rigby, Rexburg, chairman, announced Wednesday.

The Legislature has 25 days to reject the recommendation during the session or else it automatically takes effect. The Legislature rejected the recommended increase two years ago.

Rigby said following a recent committee meeting "we kept salaries about the same but set them on a daily rate rather than a monthly rate at the session of the payroll clerks on both houses and the auditor's office. However, we raised the daily expense rate from \$44 to \$60. Those expenses haven't been adjusted in four years."

Rigby explained the Internal Revenue Service allows \$62.50 per day without accounting.



Ray W. Rigby

Susan Bennion, senior research analyst for the Legislative Council, said the present salaries are \$800 monthly for the three months the Legislature is in session and \$200 a month for the nine other months in the year, or \$4,200 yearly in salaries.

The expenses are presently \$44 daily for legislators who maintain a second home in Boise during the session, meaning mostly those outside of the Boise-Nampa area, and \$25 for the Boise-Nampa residents.

Under the new recommended scheduled, the expenses for the Boise-Nampa area legislators would be increased from this \$25 to \$35.

The expenses also apply for the lieutenant governor.

Mrs. Bennion explained state employees are paid bi-weekly and the new daily schedule will make it easier for the state auditor to pay them.

Rigby said the new legislative salary under the new recommended schedule will total \$30 daily during the session, including the organizational session, and \$7 per calendar for each remaining day of the year. As most past sessions have been about 75-80 days, this would total near \$2,300. The \$7 daily pay for the other approximate 280 days would reach near \$2,000, or aggregate total of \$4,300.

Mrs. Bennion noted the increased pay and expenses also apply to the organizational session Thursday, Friday and Saturday, and for December and January.