

The election eye . . .

# Tax initiative now dominates campaign

By BEN J. PLASTINO  
Post-Register political editor

Idaho's gubernatorial contenders who were swapping blows on the murals of state issues now find the momentous tax initiative proposal dominating the campaign.

As a result some of the gubernatorial contenders have shifted positions in what appears their apparent effort to win popular support.

The seven gubernatorial aspirants, Democrat Gov. John V. Evans and Republicans Vernon F. Ravenscroft, Rep. Larry C. Jackson, C.L. "Butch" Otter; Rep. Allan F. Larsen, former Boise Mayor Jay Amyx and James Crowe, Coeur d'Alene, find themselves somewhat in a dilemma by this new threat.

It is still too early to detect the mood of the Idaho voters but there is little question the California passage of the tax initiative that would limit taxes to 1 percent of market value strikes a sympathetic response among large segments.

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Evans expressed fear the Idaho voters will follow California's lead and approve the 1 percent tax limit.

He points out it would mean a cutback of \$141 million in local government services but the Idaho Tax commission estimates the loss at \$200 million

or nearly two-thirds of the state's general fund budget of \$325 million.

Evans points out it will increase the taxes of local taxpayers, noting California at least has local options taxes while Idaho does not.

Evans hasn't flatly said he opposes the initiative but his remarks would lead one to believe it is not exactly at the top of his popular list.

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One of the most astute and courageous comments came from Jackson, who as chairman of the all powerful House Appropriation Committees, knows what he is talking about.

He noted "Idahoans should be cautious about using California solutions to property tax problems in Idaho. Californians have always had huge government. Their property incomes and sales taxes are some of the highest in the nation." (The National Tax Foundation places it third at \$940 compared with Idaho's 35th at \$590.)

Jackson points out Idaho is closer to local government and has more control, noting the Legislature can reduce spending and lower taxes without the broad approach used in California.

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Larsen, the House speaker, has said he favored the tax ini-

tiative principle but advised that it be handled by the Legislature which has the final say, anyway. He points out that California, by contrast, is placing the tax initiative as part of the constitution which limits the legislative process.

However, Larsen moved from this original position after California passage, endorsed the Idaho Tax Initiative and even said his campaign offices will help in getting petition signatures to place it on the ballot.

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Otter, a former state legislator, is perhaps the most forthright of all. He pointed out he was the only one of the gubernatorial contenders who had signed the petitions early, endorsed it without qualification, and admitted it does have constitutional objections but that these could be solved.

Ravenscroft also has strongly favored the initiative concept but like Larsen feels the Legislature could handle an alternative comprehensive tax reform.

Crowe has said he favored the principle while Amyx had said little.