

The Post-Register

The political pulse

Idaho Falls, Idaho, Wednesday, March 25, 1981

C-9

Legislative limelights...

Overriding governor's veto all for the best

BY BEN J. PLASTINO
Post-Register political editor

The failure of the Idaho Senate to sustain the gubernatorial veto on the \$195,000 public school appropriation was for the best because the Idaho Legislature would not have changed the figures much.

Four Democrats, including all three members of the leadership, Minority Leader Ron Twilegar, Boise; Assistant Minority Leader Kermit Klebert, Hope; and Caucus Chairman Mike Mitchell, Lewiston, plus Ron Beitelspacher, Grangeville, voted with almost a solid phalanx of Republicans in rejecting the governor's veto. Only Republican Sen. Vern Brassey, Boise, joined the eight Democrats in support of Gov. John V. Evans.

The vote was 26-9 to override and at least 12 were needed to sustain the veto.

* * *

This is the first time in years that this writer can remember that the Senate has failed to sustain a gubernatorial veto. It comes on the heels of the House recently sustaining his veto on the salary longevity elimination bill, the first time in years this also has taken place.

Twilegar immediately responded that the override "is not a repudiation of the governor." He explained the four dissenting Democrats said they agreed with the governor that the public school appropriations were inadequate but they felt sustaining the veto would have meant another bill that would not have increased the appropriations much, or might even have caused for a reduction.

This assessment by Twilegar is likely accurate because it was general knowledge in the legislative halls the Republicans were convinced the money wasn't there. There were some who wanted even lower funding.

Two moderate Republican friends of the governor, Reps. Kitty Gurnsey, Boise, and Elaine Kearnes, Idaho Falls, remarked in their telephone hookup talk to the Greater Idaho Falls Chamber of Commerce legislative breakfast last week they thought a veto would be unwise. They said at that time about the same figures would be

included in a new bill, slightly above or even below.

* * *

Evans, however, in the long run may be the winner because he dramatized his opposition to what he called inadequate funding, insisting the money is available with an upturn in the economy. This, of course, is challenged by the Republican leadership which insists in not budging from its \$422.5 million revenue projection limits. The end of the next two fiscal years, June, 1981, and June, 1982, will determine who is right.

Nevertheless, it was a keen disappointment for the governor that members of his own party leadership would fail to support his action, regardless of the reason.

Although Twilegar declares it is not a repudiation of the governor, it still means the governor can't count on them for support of other vetoes he may have in mind. He considered such action particularly on what he felt was lack of funding for air and water quality and higher education, in particular.

* * *

The action means the governor now will be inclined to veer away from vetos and take his case to the people. He had planned to do this Friday in a trip to Idaho Falls which he canceled in view of efforts to override the veto.

Ramifications of the veto override are difficult to assess at this time on how it will affect the future action of this and the 1982 Legislatures and the entire spectrum of the Evans Administration. How public schools, higher education, health and welfare programs and other state activities fare in the future will be an important factor.

The governor had taken a poll which indicated his veto would be upheld in the House but he likely had little idea it was in danger in the Senate. As it developed one Republican legislator he depended on for support didn't materialize and the veto was overridden by the bare two-thirds 46-23, with one absent.

These final days of the Legislature will be interesting to watch but it would appear the Republican controlled faction holds the upper hand in shoving through its key appropriation bills.