

Legislative limelights . . .

Factional fights will mark closing days of Legislature

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BOISE — The long expected factional fight between the conservative Republicans on one side and the coalition of moderate Republicans and Democrats on the other is at hand under the marble-tinted dome of the State Capitol.

Already one fracas has occurred but a number of others are expected before the 105 legislators call it quits for the year.

The conservative Republicans hold a decided edge in both the Senate and House but not enough to overcome gubernatorial vetoes or disfavors and this could bring about some drastic changes in future deliberations of the Legislature and its powerful Joint Finance Appropriation Committee.

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The first significant test took place a week ago in the House when the governor vetoed House Bill 187 which would have eliminated the state employees longevity benefits. Efforts to override the veto were immediately initiated in the House and it failed 30-39, or eight votes short of the necessary two-thirds.

Voting to sustain the veto were three east Idaho Republicans, Reps. Elaine Kearnes and Martin Trillhaase, Idaho Falls, and John O. Sessions, Driggs, plus, of course, the lone Democrat, House Minority Leader Melvin Hammond.

This is a mild surprise as it is the first time in years that the overwhelming House Republican majority has refused to override a gubernatorial veto. This year, the Republicans hold the most lopsided 56-14 margin in history in the lower chamber; yet they sustained the veto and in effect slapped the House majority leadership.

The count showed that 16 moderate Republicans spurned their own leadership and the conservative-dominated JFAC to join a solid bloc of 14 Democrats in refusing to override the veto.

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This means the Republican leadership in both the Senate and House and the JFAC have lost the crucial support of the moderate Republicans. The Senate lineup is also stacked against the conservative Republican leadership because there are at least four or five Republican moderates who will join a tight bloc of 12 Democrats to uphold a gubernatorial veto on legislation or vote for certain legislation. For example, this occurred when they defeated the emotional Right-to-Work bill 20-15. Only 12, or one more than one-third, are needed to sustain a gubernatorial veto in the 35-member Senate.

This development may cause a number of drastic switches in future legislation.

There could be wholesale revision in appropriations on public education, higher education, Department of Health and Welfare funding, public employee salary increases, Office of Aging, tourism department, Office of Energy, and air quality bureau. When the governor stamped his first veto a week ago on the longevity elimi-

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nation measure, he listed these sectors for which he thought the appropriations were insufficient.

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Now that the moderate House Republicans have shown such strong support, it means the governor will be encouraged to veto more bills.

It may force the JFAC to reconvene to reopen budgets, even though it adjourned sine die (indefinitely) a week ago. If the joint committee doesn't meet, appropriation legislation can be acted on separately by the House Appropriation Committee and the Senate Finance Committee. This is a step many have favored in view of the arrogant manner the JFAC has performed in the past session. Especially resented is the so-called "dirty dozen" conservative Republicans under the leadership of Sen. Dean Van Engelen, R-Burley, who have formed a solid bloc to ride roughshod over the five Democrats and three moderate Republicans on the Committee, for a usual 12-8 majority on controversial appropriation measures.

The east Idaho Republicans who are included in this "dirty dozen" bloc are Sens. Dane Watkins, Idaho Falls; Vearl Crystal, Rigby, and Mark G. Ricks, Rexburg, and Rep. Ray E. Infanger, Salmon. The only other east Idaho legislator on the committee is Sen. Israel Merrill, D-Blackfoot, one of the leaders for adequate funding of state government.

Don't be surprised if there isn't serious efforts to reopen budgets in many critical areas of education, health and welfare, tourism, air quality and others. This is especially so because all signs indicate the \$422.5 million revenue projection is too low and most responsible Republicans admit several more million dollars are available. Gov. John V. Evans insisted it could reach \$15 million alone for the current fiscal year, although this is doubted by many.