

Statehouse sidelights

Reapportionment knot offers complex problems

By BEN J. PLASTINO

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No matter what legislative reapportionment proposal is finally accepted, it certainly won't meet with 100 percent approval among the lawmakers or party leaders.

Actually the public is disinterested in legislative reapportionment. There is only a fraction of a voters who can say they know the number and boundaries of their legislative districts, much less who are their legislative representatives.

The present plan under court squabble divides the state into 35 districts with two state representatives and one state senator in each district, or 35 state senators and 70 state representatives.

The plan approved by North Idaho District Judge Dar Cogswell would increase the districts to 44 with the same one state senator and two representatives in each district. This is the plan which is now pending on appeal and seems headed for the Idaho Supreme Court. It could even be bounced to the U.S. Supreme Court before the judicial process is completed.

The recent observation of House Minority Leader Melvin Hammond, D-Hammond, that the present plan is fair should carry weight with the public.

Hammond said — and this writer strongly agrees — it was tough enough to try to hammer out 35 legislative districts with about equal population, much less worry about what political party would benefit.

This writer saw the legislators hard at work at all the reapportion-

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ment sessions trying to equalize boundary lines with no thought of gerrymandering. Considering the wide diversity of the state in population and economic structures, it is a wonder they did a good job. The 35 districts offer little more than 5 percent disparity from the least to the most populated.

Statements by Democratic Gov. John V. Evans that reapportionment carries political overtones don't square with the facts. Hammond, by his approval of the present plan, disagrees with the state executive chief of his own party.

The plan approved by Judge Cogswell for 44 districts seeks to avoid splitting county lines but doesn't change much except electing 21 more legislators, seven in the Senate and 14 in the House.

Hammond is justified in saying Cogswell erred in adopting a plan submitted by a North Idaho college professor who probably knows less about the subject than most of the legislators. It was a north Idaho concept all the way.

In looking over the plan, it doesn't change much in east Idaho. Bonneville and Teton counties remain in one district; Fremont and Madison in another; Lemhi, Custer, Butte, Clark and Jefferson in one, and Bingham County has one of its own.

The only wide difference from the present plan is shifting Butte from Bonneville to its rural neighboring counties and designating Bingham as one district, rather than having Shelley, Fort Hall and Aberdeen apportioned to five neighboring districts.

There are, in addition, two "floaterial" districts. One includes the nine east Idaho counties and the other groups Bingham with Power and Bannock.

Election records in the past shows the state about 58 percent Republican and 42 percent Democrat. This is not reflected in the Legislature which the Republicans control in the Senate 21-14 and a topheavy 51-19 in the House. The 58 percent is close in the Senate but in the House it's an unfair 68 percent.

The fact the governor is a Democrat and controls hundreds of jobs and sets the state policies, however, gives equilibrium to the political structure.

Attorney General Jim Jones has appealed the district judge's ruling, with intentions it is headed to the Idaho Supreme. At the rate the judicial steps are progressing, it will indeed be fortunate to settle reapportionment in the courts in time to permit legislative candidates to file for the primary election next May.

Corporate tax decreases hamper state revenue

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Corporate income tax collection in September dropped, resulting in lagging state revenue.

That was the report Friday of Martin L. Peterson, administrator of the Division of Financial Management for the period ending Oct. 1, or the first quarter for the current fiscal year.

For all revenues for the first quarter, the total was \$110.4 million, below the \$112.8 million predicted to date.

The report showed corporate income tax amounted to only \$2.2 million for the first three months of the fiscal year, which was \$2.2 million below expectation.

Other funds were above expectation and included predicted and accrued to date, respectively, personal income tax \$50.8 million and \$53.9 million; sales tax \$51.6 million and \$50.2 million, products taxes \$3.3 million and \$3.4 million, and miscellaneous \$4.8 million and \$5.1 million.

The latest predictions place the fiscal 1984 revenue ending June 30 at \$497.4 million. Of this \$228.9 million is expected in personal income tax, \$22.5 million in corporate income tax, \$194.8 million in sales tax, \$13.5 million in product taxes, and \$37.7 million in miscellaneous taxes.

Peterson said in the report that refunds in the corporate income tax exceeded gross collections due to the loss carrybacks and net operating losses, as well as refunds to banks.

"The bank refunds are the result of a ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court earlier in the year that states such as Idaho which do not tax interest on municipal

securities issued in its borders, cannot tax interest on federal securities, said Peterson.

"This and other court decisions along with changes in federal and state tax laws explain the expected drop in corporate income this fiscal year despite projected increases in corporate profits.

"Individual income tax collections continue to be somewhat higher than expected, and sales tax collections remained within the target range."

Peterson said that following the national trend, services and trade employment in Idaho has grown from 40 percent of total non-agricultural employment in 1970 to about 44 percent now.

Manufacturing's share of Idaho nonfarm employment has steadily declined from 21 percent of the total in 1970 to only 17 percent this year, he added.

"With increased per capita income, expanding use of computers, growth in tourism and changing lifestyles, services should continue to grow in Idaho," he said.

Peterson said that nationwide "the recovery appears to be maturing. The real Gross National Product in the third quarter is estimated to have grown at a 7 percent annual rate as opposed to the 9.7 percent in the second quarter."

He added housing starts in August rose to 1.935 million unit level at an annual rate. With house prices continuing to rise and mortgage rates expected to stay near 13.7 percent, the August level is likely to be this year's peak, he said.