

The Post-Register The political pulse

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Batt urges abandoning school district freeze

BY BEN J. PLASTINO
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BOISE — Lt. Gov. Philip E. Batt advised Wednesday that school districts abandon the budget freeze and levy the full amount permitted to get their maximum total appropriation.

He said local assessors, in response to a court order, strove to assess all property equally, but in the meantime failed to reappraise property according to its current inflated values.

"The 1 percent initiative changed all that," he said. "In attempting to implement the measure, the Legislature demanded that all property be put on the rolls at true 1978 value.

"This resulted in a tremendous increase in total valuation within some counties. To prevent runaway tax increases, the Legislature prohibited any increase in total tax collections within a taxing unit as a result of the 1 percent implementation.

"This is a mixed blessing. The 1 percent accomplished one beneficial purpose. Everyone is now assessed at approximately the same basis."

He said this created another inequity.

"Some school districts are levying the maximum 17 mills required for full participation in the state school funding formula. Others, due to crash reappraisal programs, levy less than 9 mills before they are controlled by the legislation freeze."

In advising the abandonment of the freeze, he said "unless we allow reasonable financing of schools from a local base, we will wipe out all local control. The school boards, if the state assumes almost all funding for public schools, will eventually take their marching orders from Boise. This would be a tragedy, considering the fine record the boards have in directing the role of schools to fit local conditions."

He said an alternative plan would be to allow local units to levy non-property taxes.

He added, however, "the dislocation which would result could be considerable. If one town levied a sales tax and its neighbor didn't, sale of major items would migrate to the non-taxer.

"The three-legged stool of taxation on property, income, and sales has done a good job for us over the years while maintaining local control of our schools. We need to loosen the strait jacket on the local units so that this system can continue."

He noted the primary impetus for passage of the 1 percent property tax limitation was to express a general protest against governmental growth at all levels.

"Almost equally important as a causative factor for the initiative was a feeling that property tax is inherently inequitable," he said. "Nothing galls a person more than paying a stiffer tax than his neighbor on like property."

Larsen ponders race for governor's post

BY BEN J. PLASTINO

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BLACKFOOT — Former House Speaker Allan F. Larsen, who farms west of Blackfoot, said Wednesday he hasn't made up his mind whether he will again seek the governor's office.

Larsen said other prospective Republican contenders have sounded him on his views but he gives them the same answer.

"I have had more more people ask me this time than they did the last time I ran," said Larsen. "This has encouraged me to make the race."

Larsen said it may be several months before he will decide, perhaps as late as a year from now, especially if the primary is moved back from May to August or September as appears probable.

Larsen said two leader Republican contenders, House Speaker Ralph Olmstead, Twin Falls, and Attorney General David Leroy, Boise, in asking about his intentions, told him they would not run if he decided to again enter the contest.

Larsen won the Republican nomination in an overcrowded field of six in the 1978 primary but lost to Democrat Gov. John V. Evans in the general.

"I know that if I do run I won't make the same mistakes I made the last time," he said.

By that he said he meant he will discard a negative theme and conduct one that is aggressive and positive.

"I may make some new mistakes but I learned from the past campaign," he said.

Besides Olmstead and Leroy, the only other prospective Re-



Allan F. Larsen

publican contender is Vernon F. Ravenscroft, now a Boise consultant, a former legislator, and who finished a close second to Larsen in the 1978 contest.

Ravenscroft also said he is undecided.

Larsen said he has no firm opinion at this time on an Idaho Republican Central Committee proposal for requiring 25 percent endorsement by convention delegates at their biennial party convention for congressional and state elective office candidates.

Larsen served 12 years, or four terms in the House, serving as speaker four years and chairman of the House Revenue and Taxation Committee before that except for the first two-year term.

Evans is expected to be unopposed for the Democratic nomination.