

# Budge sees extremely conservative Legislature

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Senate President Pro Tem Reed Budge, R-Idaho, the phlegmatic top man in the upper chamber, looks for the 46th Idaho Legislature to do as little as possible in the shortest amount of time and then go home.

Budge has maintained a low profile as the Senate leader, preferring to let the aggressive majority leader, Sen. James Risch, R-Boise, carry out the often acrimonious floor debates.

Budge, a longtime rancher, is presently serving his eighth two-year term and ranks as among those with the longest tenure in the Legislature.

Budge contends he is merely a staunch conservative, but most of his colleagues tab him on the far right and there are many on both sides of the aisle who charge he is an leading obstructionist through the manner in which he attempts to stymie legislation.

Budge lets people know where he stands and in most cases it's against any but the most essential legislation, regulations and appropriations. The Democrats and the moderate Republicans consider him their

prime antagonist, although Budge insists he is representing the philosophical mainstream of the Idaho voters — and recent election results would substantiate him to a large extent.

Tackling the main issues of the upcoming session, Budge insists the 1 Percent Tax Initiative has been fully implemented and needs little changes. He said the lawmakers likely could take a look in the area of re-evaluation to avoid the harsh impact of high property taxes in one year.

Budge also expressed irritation at the Idaho Tax Commission, feeling it has misinterpreted many laws and regulations referring to taxes and appraisals.

It is little surprise that he expresses vehement opposition to any new taxes, including income, sales, severance, and even state gas tax.

"Our (state) appropriations should be geared to our economy," he said. "Our economy is down and we should keep our funding at a minimum."

He said it is difficult to say at this point whether there should be any tax relief, feeling this should depend on the revenue available. As such, he is not pre-

pared to favor homeowners exemptions or others unless the money is there.

Budge said the new budget shouldn't be any larger than the \$380 million approved for this year, which includes the 3.85 percent holdback.

"In fact," he said, "we may face another holdback considering the revenue may not come up to expectation."

He labeled as "ridiculous" any revenue anticipation of \$420 million to \$490 million, adding "this is very optimistic and I don't believe will happen."

"If the governor had been a little closer touch with the economy we would not have had need for the holdback" said Budge.

He voiced strong opposition against any increase in vehicle registration fees, license, and state gas tax to finance highway improvements; increase in fish and game fees and expanded fish and game programs; more city local option powers, insisting they had enough; a full-fledged Department of Energy; further regulations for day care centers, shelter homes and other care facilities.