

The Post-Register

The political pulse

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Idaho Falls, Idaho, Wednesday, June 24, 1981

Legislative limelights...

Governor, Legislature want speedy session

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Both the Republican leadership and Gov. John V. Evans apparently agree the special session of the Idaho Legislature which opens July 7, will be confined almost wholly to legislative and congressional reapportionment.

The governor has learned in the past that proposals he submits become prime targets of the Republican leadership. It underscores the truth of the time-worn axiom, the governor proposes and the Legislature disposes.

The governor believes the session could go as long as two weeks because reapportionment is a tough problem. Senate Majority Leader James Risch, R-Boise, the astute Senate majority leader, believes it can be wound up in four or five days, suggesting the session could adjourn Friday night of the same week.

Risch may be more right than Evans because he is closer to the problem. This is one issue the Legislature has almost 100 percent jurisdiction.

Legislators have got off to a flying start with their series of regional meetings to hash over their boundary changes. Senate President Pro Tem Reed Budge, R-Soda Springs, said he plans for all legislators to hold their own regional meetings at the start of the Legislature to help the process.

This writer has believed this could cause more problems than it solves by encouraging legislators to defend their regional interest at the expense of the statewide picture but it is a starting point and has considerable merits.

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The governor learned the hard way the Legislature is not disposed to look kindly on his recommendations, regardless of their merits. With the intensive 1982 election campaign just a few short months away, the political pressure will be even greater by the Republican leaders to seek to thwart the Democratic governor.

Thus, Evans has repeatedly stated he will not place issues on the special session, aside from legislative and congressional redistricting, unless there is a strong demand from the Legislature.

"I will not waste time or money unless the Legislature will approve the supplemental requests," Evans is fond of saying repeatedly in recent state appearances.

Risch and other Republican legislative leaders agree with this view, contending there is no proposal that is pressing enough that can't wait until the 1982 regular session next winter.

About the only exception — and Risch is ame-

nable to this — is the comparatively minor request for \$150,000 supplemental funding to the Office of Aging to pay for home health costs for senior citizens.

Both the governor and the Republican legislative leadership said they have long lists of requests for inclusion in the special session but they won't see the light of day.

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One reason the governor has been sensitive in recommending legislative proposals has been the tendency — almost a mania — by the Republican leadership to shoot them down.

In the last special session in May, the governor included five main items: Appropriating \$900,000 for the Legislature's own legislative staff; \$450,000 funding for 14,000 people on Aid to Dependent Children Program; change in the Medicaid law to give the state better cost control; increased funding for highway maintenance and improvements, and biennial budgeting.

What did the Legislature do?

The only one that passed — you guessed it — was its own legislative staff appropriation.

It became obvious during the three days under the marble dome of the state Capitol that the vast bulk of the legislators, including many Democrats, were in no mood for appropriating any additional money except for their own use.

Actually none of the topics were deep partisan issues and this was vividly reflected in votes that cut across party lines. The Republican leadership felt none of the items were critical and could be deferred.

The Legislative staff appropriation was justified as Evans had vetoed this in retaliation for the legislature drastically cutting his own office staff — something he should not have done despite the temptation. But two wrongs don't make a right.

It would appear then the governor will not press supplemental funding requests, obviously preferring they become a political issue for the 1982 general election campaign. He was right and the Legislature leadership was wrong in predicting there would be surpluses which may reach \$15 million this fiscal year and \$30 million next fiscal year.

He contends the Legislature made unnecessary cuts on many critical programs in the field of health and welfare, air and quality quality management, human services and many, many others. It will now be up to the legislators to rectify the financial problems they created last winter.