School boss asks big sales tax hike

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Idaho's school boss, Superintendent of Public Instruction Jerry Evans, proposed a substantial sales tax hike to cure the public schools' financial dilemma.

Otherwise, he said, he sees nothing but acute financial problems for Idaho schools for this and the next fiscal year.

Supt. Jerry Evans

Evans said rather than increase the sales tax by 1, 1.5, or 2 percent, he suggests hiking it to 4.5 or even 5 percent from the present 3 percent.

Evans said in imposing a sales tax increase, it should not carry a sunset clause for its automaitic closure after a certain period.

The school boards could use their authority to borrow some additional money to meet public school obligations, said Evans.

"The bankers tell me there would be no guarantee for the increased funding in a certain amount of time and it could mean a higher rate of interest on borrowing," said Evans.

The latest financial plan unfolded by the Republican leadership is leaving Evans less than happy because it calls for the Legislature to dip into a $7.7 public education fund.

"This will create a big cash flow problem for schools," the distressed Evans said in a Post-Register telephone interview Friday.

"It means it will add to the school problems need for the next fiscal year," he said, meaning he 1984 fiscal year beginning July 1.

He pointed out the public schools for the present fiscal year are carrying over about a $9 million fund which they plan to pay future bills.

If the Legislature takes most of this fund, he said, the schools will not have much of a carryover to pay their bills.

"It means they will need to borrow against the second half of property tax levy," said Evans, "then hope the apportioment will be fairly large. We don't known what will be the revenue at this time.

"If the Leagislature is willing to pass the revenue measures that have proposed it means schools will have a tough time to get by."

Evans noted the latest Republican revenue proposal has been placed in the State Affairs Committee, apparently circumventing the House Revenue and Taxation Committee where major revenue measures usually originate.

Evans declined comment on this except to say "it looks like they are playing games. It seems to me that major appropriation bills, especially when there is a sales tax increase, should go to the Revenue and Taxation Committee."