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Legislative limelights. . . .

Evans woos business in key state message

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The State of the State message given by Gov. John V. Evans to the Idaho Legislature at the opening day of the current session last Monday underscored his reliance and cooperation with business.

This, of course, is a thrust intended to combat the charges of his two prime Republican opponents, House Speaker Ralph Olmstead and Lt. Gov. Philip E. Batt that he is anti-business and they have left it clear they intend to make this one of their prime issue in their coming campaign.

Their statements must be viewed with some question because Evans is not only a rancher and farmer but he also is a banker. Both Olmstead and Batt are farmers, the former in crops and cattle operations and Batt in onions.

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Evans' main points are to revitalize Idaho's economy, pointing to the state's vast natural resources as one of the prime elements to bring this about. "Under careful stewardship, that natural resources heritage will sustain our continue prosperity for many years to come," he said.

The governor then pointed out the state has the best recreational opportunities in the nation. He mentioned the Idaho travel industry now employs 25,000 persons, adding "we must help that industry to expand in order to bring more visitor dollars into our state and to create more jobs for Idaho residents."

He added the state cannot control circumstances at the national level but must move ahead on its own.

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The governor then observed that over 90 percent of the total of businesses in Idaho is small business, mentioning the Main street merchants, small farmer, owner of sawmills and small logging operators.

He pledged his support to business, adding he intended to "seek out clean, progressive, non-polluting industries which want to invest in Idaho. These same industries will help us to expand and diversify our economic base."

As part of his program, he noted a bond sale was completed which will make approximately 600 new mortgages available to Idahoans at less than market rates and will mean more jobs and enable more Idahoans to own their homes.

The governor then plugged for industrial revenue bonds, a proposal which has received one of its most avid supports from Idaho Falls.

He also said he will issue an executive order creating an Idaho investment panel to explore potential public development finance mechanism, identify the credit needs of small business, recommend programs which increase business access to capital, recommend changes to state laws and regulations which will facilitate new investment, and develop specific proposals and guidelines in the use of the Idaho Public Pension Fund monies for new investment alternatives.

He also suggested creation of an investment tax credit for Idaho business, saying he would want one designed to stimulate new investment, not one almost exclusively benefitting the largest corporations in the state and rewarding businesses for investments that would have occurred anyway. This is an apparent reference to the bill he vetoed in the 1981 session.

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His proposal to increase the cigarette tax by a nickel per pack and diverting \$5.5 million annually to repay the Water Pollution Control Fund could draw some opposition. For example, House Speaker Ralph Olmstead suggests instead using an anticipated surplus for this.

His suggestion for reviving the air quality programs also may stumble, in view of responses from east Idaho legislators to a Post-Register questionnaire who generally opposed reviving this program as unnecessary.

Evans also called for establishing an energy policy that will provide for reasonable industrial expansion and growth.

He said he has instructed his department directors to recommend changes in Idaho's regulatory process by July 1; within 90 days will convene a forum of experts on regulatory reform to develop specific strategies for eliminating unnecessary regulations; and will ask business leaders to identify their most serious and immediate regulatory problems.

Finally, he said his main three goals are revitalization of Idaho's economy, achieving excellence in the educational system from kindergarten through the university, and providing adequate services for those citizens who cannot care for themselves.