

Education bills scanty in current Legislature

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Education is likely the most important topic discussed in the current Idaho Legislature but most of the action is taking place outside of the House Education Committee.

The veteran committee chairman, Rep. Kurt L. Johnson, R-Idaho Falls, said he has a number of measures in the committee and more are expected from its Senate counterpart, the Senate Health, Education and Welfare Committee, but they are mostly of housekeeping nature.

By this, he means they are bills that correct technical defects in existing laws or are mainly of administrative nature that scarcely affect the public.

The major action, of course, is taking place in the House State Affairs Committee which approved the budget-balancing House Bill 130. Part of this was vetoed by Gov. John V. Evans on education reduction. The measure now appears headed for the court on whether the vetoes were legal.

The most action was furnished by Rep. J. C. Chadbond, R-Idaho Falls, in submitting a school consolidation study bill.

In the first test a couple weeks ago, it was defeated 8-5 for printing but Chadbond revised the measure to read "consolidation of school administration programs" and made a few other changes. It won unanimous consent last Thursday for printing. It will now return to committee to decide where it will be approved for floor action, said Johnson.

Chadbond explains the bill provides for a seven-member task forces to study school consolidation and then report its findings to the 1984 Legislature.

Chadbond said no funding was listed in the

second bill but the first one contained a provision of \$15,000 for the study, primarily for travel and other administrative costs.

"I voted for the bill," said Johnson, "but I don't know what kind of response it will receive in the House."

State Rep. Robert W. Forrey, R-Nampa, who had opposed the first bill, introduced the motion for printing on the second attempt and commended Chadbond for the exhaustive study he had made.

Johnson has urged adequate money for education funding at all levels but realized the sources are limited.

He said he hoped at least \$215 million could be allocated to public schools which was the amount approved last year.

"I also would like to see more money go for higher education," said Johnson.

"It seems to me the present alternatives to raise more money are not enough. It seems to me that a 2 cent sales tax increase is the only answer."

Johnson acknowledged, however, that sentiment for the 2-cent sale tax is lacking at this time.

Johnson expressed support for school consolidation, pointing out Nevada has only 14 school district and Utah, which has almost double the population of Idaho, has only 44. Idaho has 115 school districts.

Other of the more important bills in his committee, said Johnson, include one that limits the legal counsels on teacher salary negotiations, raises the driving age from 14 to 16, and specifies disciplinary action teachers can take of obstreperous students.

All of these bills have sparked controversies and many may face amendments, said the committee chairman.