

Lagging solons seek to adjourn Legislature

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Although the 47th Idaho Legislature is now in its 80th day and certain to hang up one of the longest sessions in history, it must be remembered it spent its first 40 days in hassling over the 1983 fiscal year budget.

This is something it has not been called on to do — setting a current fiscal budget instead of the coming fiscal year. In this case, the Legislature did not turn to the fiscal 1984 budget starting July 1, until Feb. 25, the day after the Senate failed to override the governor's \$10.5 million line item veto for public schools.

The 80th day of the Legislature compares with the all time record of 89 in 1967, 85 in 1980 and the first one of 82 in 1890.

It is certain to go until Saturday which would be the 83rd day but in all probability spill over into next week. If its adjourns April 9 as many believe, it would hang up a new mark of 90 days.

After first hand observation, it appears the reluctances of the House leadership, primarily House Speaker Tom Stivers, R-Twin Falls, and Democratic Gov. John V. Evans for a candid face-to-face discussion on the budget is the main stumbling block.

The statement Monday of Rep. Walter E. Little, R-New Plymouth, chairman of the House State Affairs Committee, former majority leader and 10-term veteran, that the longer the session lasts, the higher budget, carries truth.

Little has recommended the approach of the leadership "discussing an agreement with the governor. He is reasonable and understands the problems."

Stivers has been insistent of setting a budget of as low as possible, first suggesting the revenue raising minimum of \$394 million, then raising his sights to \$413 million, and now \$440 million.

Crux of the solution hanging up adjournment is in reaching a budget compromise on Stivers' \$440 million and the minimum of \$460 million or more wanted by the governor. The governor said he has recommended \$474 million but expresses a willingness to go as low as \$465 million, if necessary.

The Republicans complain that the governor should have called a special session in July when the shortfall became evident but the governor replied that would have been in the middle of the political campaign when partisan politics would prevail and little could be accomplished.

Evans then wanted a special session in December but the Republican leaders argued that was only a month before the regular session and not necessary.

In either case, if the Legislature had addressed its financial problems last year at either of the two sessions, it would have received more money from the increased sales tax, and other revenue-raising proposals. As matters now stand, the one cent sales tax increase did not become effective until March 1 when it could have been Jan. 1 or even last Aug. 1.

Other tax-raising proposals, such as modifications in the Job Credit, Investment Credit and corporate taxes aren't even enacted and can't take effect before May 1 or later. It's also ironic the Republican leadership would not consider these in December but now has turned to them as the main revenue-raising sources to fit the new budget.

Most of the committees have virtually completed their work on legislation other than the financial bills. It's no problem for them to pass what they consider essential and ignore the others.

It remains now for the governor, Stivers and other leaders to frankly discuss the issues, get an agreement where each give a little, and go home.