

Legislative limelights...

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# Hefty surplus to nag Idaho special session

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The surplus of \$3 to \$5 million — and it may be more — could present a problem at the Idaho Legislature special session, which convenes Tuesday.

Now it's delightful to have a little extra money in the pocket but Democratic Gov. John V. Evans and the Republican controlled Legislature may find themselves at odds on what to do with it.

There's enough difficulty in the legislators toiling over congressional and legislative district reapportionments without scraping over some of the meat left over from the bones of the last session.

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The governor insists that he won't place on the agenda at the special session any proposal aside from reapportionment unless there is strong indication it will be approved. He has already issued his call for the reapportionment special session, sans other topics. These can be added any time by the governor, even while the Legislature is in session.

The Republican controlled Legislature has been sharply criticized for its failure to properly fund agencies, even to the point it appeared to be embarked on a course of destroying state government.

It's Legislative Projection Committee was and the governor's own Division of Finance ment under Richard A. Slaughter, chief absolutely correct in forecasting the for the 1981 fiscal year ending and every indication it is right for year beginning Wednesday. nt to the governor's contention that er view the state in an optimistic ight in the glow rather than in the pessimistic outlook.

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ious situation, however, is the Leg-  
giant refusal to accept the govern-  
on budget for fiscal year 1982, and  
hed it to \$420 million. These deep cuts  
edship for public education, higher  
n, air and water quality management,  
of Aging, Office of Energy, Women's Com-

mission, and a wide range of health and welfare services.

The legislative Republican leadership has a point in insisting it is better to vote a conservative budget, rather than risk a deficit, although all signs at that time pointed to an economic upturn.

It's understandable both the governor and the Republican legislative leaders are reluctant to spend any more time than absolutely necessary at the special session during the hot July days. This is at the height of the vacation season and when farming and other outdoor work is in full swing.

The Board of Examiners made up of the governor, Secretary of State Pete T. Cenarrusa and Attorney General David H. Leroy, it is recalled, ordered a 3.85 percent holdback a year ago in fear the revenue would not reach the \$388 million budgeted.

The so-called financial experts then believed only about \$380 million would be received. The latest figures by Slaughter showed it will reach between \$390 million and \$392 million, plus \$1 million more available from unspent funds from the state agencies.

The board just recently lifted this holdback to give back \$7.1 million in property tax relief. This will be allotted in the form of proportionate reduced tax bill this year.

Here again, the governor had a strong point in urging this money be held until this fiscal year and then returned to the financially-strapped school districts. Many school districts are voting override levies to meet the minimum operating costs.

This property tax relief for the average owner — of say, a \$50,000 market value home—would amount anywhere from \$10 to \$30 each, depending on what school district he resides. He likely will pay much more through the override levies and increased school service fees and other taxes.

Thus, the governor and Legislature face the decision of doing something during the special session to partially correcting the wrong committed in the 1982 session. And they also can think seriously of readjusting the 1982 fiscal budget with supplemental funding at their regular session next winter.