

Politics

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Legislative limelights

Legislature more selective in enacting fewer bills

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The 1983 Idaho Legislature met for 95 days, the longest session in Idaho's history, and introduced the third largest number of bills but enacted the smallest number of measures in at least the last decade.

The governor vetoed the largest number of bills, according to available records. As a result, the 105 weary legislators have been called into a special session next week to tackle, almost exclusively, the subject of more funding for education. General consensus among the legislators is that they don't intend to enact such funding.

Last week's report on the standard of mediocrity in the nation's education bolsters the governor's hand but whether it will influence the tax-hike-wary lawmakers is doubtful.

The report from the Legislative Data Center by Dorothy Hanford, assistant administrator, shows the 1983 Legislature prepared 2,009 new pieces of legislation, changes, amendments and engrossments; introduced 660 new bills, resolutions and memorials; but passed only 302 bills.

These figures compare to previous years' figures as follows:

New legislation, changes, amendments and engrossments in 1982, 1,721; 1981, 2,068; 1980,

2,016; 1979, 1,648; 1978, 1,704; 1977, 1,622; and 1976, 1,800.

New bills, resolutions and memorials in 1982, 692; 1981, 781; 1980, 813; 1979, 684; 1978, 737; 1977, 737; and 1976, 833.

The bills passed in 1982, 381; 1981, 381; 1980, all-time record of 410; 1979, 338; 1978, 387; 1977, 340; and 1976, 370.

In 1983 there were 40 resolutions and memorials adopted, below 1982's 41; 1981's 43; 1980's 53; 1979's 46; 1978's 51; 1977's 60; and 1976's 50.

The governor vetoed a record 20 bills in the past session, far above 1982's 11; 1981's 16; 1980's 10; 1979's 13; 1978's 12; 1977's 14; and 1976's 3.

The governor let eight become law without his signatures, compared with only one in 1982 and 16 in 1981. He also line vetoed two bills.

The length of the session of 95 surpassed the previous record of 89 in 1967 and was well above 1982's 73 days; 1981's 75; 1980's 85; 1979's 78; 1978's 69; 1977's 71; and 1974's 75.

The governor handed the 1982 Legislature a C plus but it is apparent the 1983 edition is given a failure mark by his repeated statements it did not find enough funding for education.

The figures in recent sessions indicate that any thought of a bienn

ial session is a pipedream. The state's population of close to one million and overall annual budgets of more than \$1 billion with a general fund budget approaching half a million would indicate the legislators must meet at least once a year.

Even in the four years before the Legislature adopted annual sessions in 1969, there were special sessions on off years to handle the state's business. There is a special session next week and there was one each in 1981, 1980, 1971, 1968 and 1967.

There has been legislation in recent years to revert to biennial sessions but these efforts have received less than enthusiastic support.

A plan for a session to handle strictly budget and other financial problems one year, and business other than financial on the following year could be seriously considered but this plan doesn't appear to generate much support.

Considering the mood of most of the legislators who like the milder climate and relaxation in Boise during the winter months, the annual sessions are now a fixture. Maybe in the far future as the population grows (Idaho is the seventh fastest growing state in the nation), sessions may take several months each year, just as they do now in the more heavily populated states.