

Legislative limelights

Gov. Evans, GOP both say they did right thing

By BEN J. PLASTINO

Post-Register political editor

After the three-day special legislative session, did Democratic Gov. John V. Evans or the Republican-controlled legislature score the most points with Idaho residents?

Only time will tell. The answer will be based on 1984 election results and on public reaction to funding approved by the 1983 Legislature.

Evans asked the Legislature for an additional \$13.2 million to be dispersed as follows: \$9 million for public schools, now funded at \$215 million; \$3 million, higher education now at \$70 million; \$600,000, vocational education, now at \$13.4 million; and \$600,000, agricultural research-extension service, now at \$8.6 million.

As people who followed the special session know, the Legislature passed education funding bills vetoed by the governor during the regular session.

Evans has not ruled out a special session after July 1 if revenues continue to increase and if he feels legislators, after talking with voters, have changed their minds. Chances for such a session, however, are remote. Evans thinks the legislators are not listening to their constituents.

Nearly every lawmaker contacted by this writer says constituents' views run 20-1 against more education funding. They say Evans is incorrect, and that they are closer to the taxpayers' views.

In the special session, every Democrat voted against a bill for the same funding approved during the regular session. The final Senate vote was 20-15; the House vote was 40-30.

On the Republican side, only Sen. John Barker, Buhl, joined 14 Democratic senators in opposing

the measure, because he wanted more vocational education funding.

In the House, 11 Republicans joined 19 Democrats in voting against the bill. Republicans Ray Infanger, Salmon, and JoAn Wood, Rigby, thought the \$215 million figure was too high.

The Republicans who wanted more school funding were Reps. Steve Antone, Rupert; Tom Boyd, Genesee; Kitty Gurnsey, Boise; Lloyd Harris, Boise; Dan Kelly, Mountain Home; Lawrence Knigge, Filer; Jim Lucas, Moscow; Walter E. Little, New Plymouth, and D. Cornell Thomas, Pingree.

Both sides quote figures justifying their stand. The governor points to hundreds of letters and cards he has received that ask for more funds.

A (Boise) Idaho Statesman survey showed its readers voted 1,521-1,144 in favor of additional funding; 205 wanted less money.

Rep. Tom Cushman, R-Horsehoe Bend, said his survey came up 95-7 against more school funding. He said a survey authorized by a Boise firm that ran ads in Idaho newspapers showed residents favored existing funding 736-21.

The majority of Republicans who voted to hold the line said they would be willing to vote for supplemental funding in the 1984 session if the economy turns around.

House Speaker Tom W. Stivers and Senate President Pro Tem James Risch's are right in saying the anticipated \$19 million state revenue increase should be earmarked to help pay the \$70 million shortfall for fiscal 1983. Treasurer Ruth Moon told the Senate Finance Committee this money would reduce Idaho's debts and help the state retain its credit rating in the New York market.