

# Politics

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## Legislative limelights

# Sales, income tax hikes possible

BY BEN J. PLASTINO

Post-Register political editor

Senate President Pro Tem Jim Risch, R-Boise, acknowledged Friday an income tax surcharge or one half sales tax increases may be needed to break the budgetary deadlock looming between the Republican controlled Legislature and Democrat Gov. John V. Evans.

He confirms what many others Republican legislative leaders have long suspected but have not spoken aloud in the frail hope they could settle for a \$440 million budget. This runs smack against Evans's recommendation of a \$474 million request but who has expressed a willingness to lower his sights to \$465 million, and perhaps a little lower.

This is the final piece of major legislation left to send the 105 lawmakers packing for home after what will be either the longest or second longest session in its history. Saturday is the 83rd day, the third longest and surpassed only by the record 89 in 1967 and 85 in 1980.

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Risch, elevated to the top Senate post this year to replace the deposed Sen. Reed Budge, R-Soda Springs, said the legislative strategy is to pass the \$40,493,300 budget for gubernatorial action. If the governor rejects it, as expected, then the governor and Republican will seek a compromise that likely will settle midway between the two figures — around \$450 million.

"We are still short a few million dollars to meet the budget," Risch explained in a Post-Register telephone interview. "We have a number of revenue bills kicking around but I don't think it will be enough. These include the Job Credit repeal, Business Investment modification, corporate tax, loss carryback and a few others."

Risch noted the House Revenue and Taxation Committee can clear the income and sales tax increase in short time and they can be pushed through the Legislature in a single day if there is suspension of the rules to waive the three readings on separate days.

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Risch said of the two proposals, he favors the income tax surcharge as it is easier to place on a temporary basis. He suggested a 10 percent surcharge if this is the case. He said the one half percent sales tax increase also could be made for one year but it is much more difficult to terminate once it has been placed on the books.

Either of these taxes could raise about \$25 million which would be enough to reach near the \$450 million budget figures.

Actually if the Legislature had slapped on a 2 percent sales tax increase at the start instead of a one center it would have had advantages, some of them comparable money and been out of relatively large amounts. In fact, 1982 Boise by now. It has been engaged in "patch and scratch" income proposals during most of the session and these are still short of

The 2 per center at the start likely would have not raise any more of a ripple than did the 1

Not even in the Depression days of the 1930s was the situation as bad. That's because the pending legislation is financing the unemployment compensation bill to make it solvent. The House and Senate have different versions that must be resolved and this is likely to be done by reducing the benefits to the jobless and increasing the tax for the employers.

If these steps outlined by Risch are followed, it is highly probable the Legislature could adjourn sine die as early as Wednesday or more likely by the end of next week, Friday or maybe Saturday.

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## Legislative limelights

# 1983 Legislature labeled unique

By BEN J. PLASTINO

Post-Register political editor

Whatever happens the remainder of this session, the 47th Idaho Legislature will go down as perhaps the most unique in many years.

Not only will it hang up the second longest record in history — and maybe the longest — but it also will be noted for enacting some noteworthy legislature despite its frightful financial problems.

It is now in its 87th day and threatens to eclipse the record of 89 days established in 1967. It will do this if it spills to Saturday.

This is the first time in as long as can be remembered and perhaps in Idaho's 93 years of statehood that the Legislature has had to cope with such large deficits.

This is in vivid contrast with most recent years when the Legislature has had the luxury of surpluses, some of them comparable money and been out of relatively large amounts. In fact, 1982 Boise by now. It has been engaged in "patch and scratch" income did not have some kind of surplus proposals during most of the session and these are still short of

It's a shock for the veterans who unanimously say this is by far the most difficult session they have attended.

Not even in the Depression days of the 1930s was the situation as bad. That's because the pending legislation is financing the unemployment compensation bill to make it solvent. The House and Senate have different versions that must be resolved and this is likely to be done by reducing the benefits to the jobless and increasing the tax for the employers.

Furthermore the state gave little help to public schools, compared with present.

Yet with all of its financial headaches the Legislature has been able to come up with some

noteworthy legislation and more may be enacted before it grinds to a halt, hopefully by the end of the week.

Both chambers passed by unanimous vote what is called by some the toughest drunken driving law in the nation.

Other bills, which have received little attention because of lack of emotionalism but which are of paramount importance, are those modernizing the Vital Statistics Bureau, deregulating most interest rates in the state, a 48-page bill that recodifies the Consumer Credit Law, the Anti-Harassment Act aimed against radical racial and religious groups, revamping of the Juvenile Code; and the repeal of a law that sends imprisons those guilty of minor infractions, such as in the famed Christopher Peterman youth case at Boise. Other bills include the law making utility power rights subordinate to irrigation rights; the change in the unemployment compensation law to better cope with the financial shortfall; a 2-cent highway tax to keep Idaho's highway from deteriorating; and a measure that revamps the unemployment compensation program to keep it solvent.

Among keen disappointments were the failure of the Legislature to implement the Idaho Energy Plan, to put teeth in the open meeting law; the lack of a workable indigent medical care bill for counties; more home rule for cities and counties; and a number of other bills that may not be enacted.

It still needs compromises to settle its budget and it will do this at a figure higher than the \$440 million the Republican legislative leadership approved and lower than the \$474 million the governor recommended.