

Legislative limelights

Legislature gets praise on decorum

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This 47th Idaho Legislature, if nothing else, handled itself with decorum despite its admittedly worst financial problems in history.

Both Democratic Gov. John V. Evans and the Republican-controlled Legislature faced a common problem but they saw the solutions in different light.

Overall, the Idaho Legislature may not be viewed as the brightest in the nation but in decorum it doesn't take a back seat to any other. It probably is in the van, as many impartial observers will verify.

Attaches and others who have served in other state legislatures say they find the Idaho lawmakers superior in the dignified manner in which they go about their state business.

Lawmakers in other states, say these outside observers, often appear with unkempt beard, long shaggy hair, unshaven, and slovenly dress. Drunkenness and rudeness is not uncommon.

These are traits seldom seen at the Idaho Capitol. Idaho legislators have a self-imposed dress code which requires coats and ties for men and neat apparel for the women. It is closely followed.

After viewing the political scene for close to 40 years, it's rather remarkable there have been no Idaho lawmakers or even high elective Idaho officials ever accused of such serious charges as

bribery, kickbacks or crooked tricks that would cast doubt on their integrity.

These types of criminal violations appear all too frequently in Congress and in many other state legislatures, it might be added.

The only brawl in recent times that this writer can remember took place in the last session. In that case, Sen. J. Wilson Steen, R-Glenns Ferry, struck Sen. Vernon Brassey, R-Boise, twice on the face after being called a profane name by Brassey.

This incident took place in a corridor outside of the Senate room during a recess. Brassey later publicly apologized to the Senate.

Neither are back this session. Brassey was defeated in the primary for re-election and Steen did not seek re-election.

Perhaps the worst situations come about when lawmakers are frequently entertained by lobbyists at dinners, luncheons, receptions and others social.

Yet, these appear accepted and give the legislators opportunities to shave their living expenses. Reports showed lobbyists spent more than \$60,000 for this entertainment the first two months of the session.

Also there are many obvious cases in which there are conflict of interest and strong favoritism on many measures.

Yet, Idaho's legislators are paid the seventh lowest in the nation. It often raises the question jokingly if they are paid what they are worth.