

JFAC discusses state financing

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By **BEN J. PLASTINO**

Post-Register political editor

Members of the Legislative Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee began Tuesday discussing finances for the state government the 1983 fiscal year, John C. Andreason, director of the Legislative Fiscal Office, said Tuesday.

Several of the members were not on hand because of drifting highways but most are expected by Wednesday or Thursday.

Five east Idaho legislators are members of the committee, Sens. Dane Watkins, R-Idaho Falls; Vearl Crystal, R-Rigby; Israel Merrill, D-Blackfoot; and Rep. Ray E. Infanger, R-Salmon, who all left Tuesday or Wednesday for the sessions.

Other east Idaho legislators plan to leave over the weekend for the regular session to open Monday morning.

Andreason said the 20-member committee - 10 each from the Senate and House - will listen to general briefing and procedures at the start.

Early speakers include executives of the Department of Administration on their request to increase rental fees for space charges and utilities at state-owned buildings; and Larry Seale, director of the budget office, who will give briefings on the agency requests and the governor's budget recommendations of \$477.5 million.

Andreason said state agencies have requested \$541 million, indicating deep slashes must be made to get them within the revenue projection of about \$460 million.

Andreason said the JFAC will meet continually until Jan. 29 on the state agency requests. The meetings will be held all day this week but will be limited to the early morning hours during the legislative sessions.

The most important are those for the Department of Education to be considered Jan. 26-29 and the Department of Health and Welfare Jan. 20-22. These two agencies account for 87 percent of the general fund budget, he noted.

Andreason explained the DHW and education are reserved for the last because it is expected to be known by Jan. 14-15 the revenue projection determined by the Revenue Projection Committee. This will enable the JFAC to know more accurately what is left for the two major agencies.

Education takes about 70 percent and DHW 17 percent of the state budget.

Watkins said he also will be attending the six-member Revenue Projection Committee meetings. He is vice chairman of the committee. Watkins said he will alternate between attending the JFAC and revenue projection committee meetings for the next two weeks.

Business executives are scheduled to speak to the revenue projection committee this week to help the committee estimate the projected revenue.