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The political pulse

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The 1982 Idaho Legislature . . .

Eastern Idaho solons stress conservatism

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the final in a series of 16 articles giving the views of east Idaho legislators and the leadership on the salient issues shaping up for the coming session. This one summarizes their views.)

BY BEN J. PLASTINO
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Eastern Idaho legislators, as has been traditional in the past, showed a deep conservative strain in answering a questionnaire on their views on key issues for the 1982 Idaho Legislature which convenes Monday.

Many of the lawmakers agreed they probably are more conservative than their constituents in the matter of even considering tax increases of any kinds or supporting programs that would incur any additional costs.

Their responses indicates they are content to hold the line and appropriate only what is absolutely necessary, fearing repercussions if they do otherwise for the coming elections. As it appears all expect to seek re-election this is an important point in their thinking.

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Perhaps their most important differences and embarking them on a collision course with Democratic Gov. John V. Evans is their belief the state revenues will reach only \$465 million at the most, and probably less. This compares with the \$477.5 million Evans recommended for his budget. Much will depend on the revenue projection set by the Legislative Revenue Project Committee late the coming week.

They left little doubt they oppose any tax increase, and this should be no problem, as the governor did not not recommended any in his budget message a month ago. If one were deemed necessary, most pick the sales tax as the fairest but turn thumbs down on a severance or any other kind of a tax.

They also see no substantial increase in highway funding, pointing out the Legislature did grant a 2 cent per gallon tax and 21 percent vehicle license increases last year that should do for the time being.

However, the majority also expressed their desire to see no drastic cutback in the Idaho State Police as has been done recently and further want manning of the ports of entry to collect commercial truck fees from out-of-state trucks which have frequently circumvented the payments.

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They unanimously pick education as the top priority, along with the governor, but suggest some cost-saving changes, such as administration consolidations, merger of school districts,

joining Lewis-Clark State College with the University of Idaho or designating it as a vocational school, and taking action for raising student tuition and other fees.

Most also see little chances on embarking on new programs or reinstating others, such as funding for public television, reviving the air quality management management program or expanding clear water surveillance.

Among other matters, they favored stiffer crime penalties but no further Fish and Game license fee increases, placing the women's prison at the former State Hospital North facilities at Orofino, avidly support the Right to Work Law, and feel the open meeting law is adequate.

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One of the most controversial issues but which oddly the public cares little about is approving legislative reapportionment. The special session in July did approve congressional redistricting by shifting 21,500 in Ada county from the 1st to the 2nd congressional districts but the governor vetoed legislative reapportionment.

The sharpest controversies center in the Pocatello and Boise districts but if the entire plan is revived it could open a can of worms. Many east Idaho legislators, for example, are far from happy how boundary lines were changed, especially in placing the city of Shelley, and Shelley and Snake River school districts in different legislative districts. The 10 East Idaho counties hit almost on the head the 26,963 legislative average and it would have only needed minor shuffling of boundary lines in the city of Idaho Falls to have adjusted the districts.

The most opposition centers on District 33, extending from Onedia though south Bannock to Power County, and the urban-rural representation on three legislative districts in Ada County.

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East Idaho legislators also expressed opposition to the Idaho Energy Plan's failure to place nuclear energy as a top priority but agree the Idaho Water Plan is working satisfactory, although it could stand some minor changes, such as protecting minimum streamflow.

A majority also favor moving the present May primary date to August or early September and eliminating the May quadrennial presidential elections. There appears a mixed reaction on requiring party convention endorsement for congressional and state candidates but probably nothing will be done.