

Legislative limelights . . .

East Idaho legislators influential in session

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BOISE — The 18 East Idaho legislators from 10 area counties, most of whom have long service, were guiding forces in the 1980 session, which is now striving towards adjournment, hopefully by the end of this week.

Two lawmakers who were especially effective were Reps. Linden B. Bateman, R-Idaho Falls, and Darwin L. Young, R-Blackfoot.

Both shed their restrictive conservative mantles and embarked on progressive legislation that will help the state.

Young not only was a key hand in writing implementation for the dominant 1 Percent Tax Initiative for this session, as well as last year, but he also steered to successful enactment on one of the finest pieces of legislation — giving the Idaho Housing Agency authority to grant another \$200 million in low interest loans.

Bateman was a moving force in legislation that gave public employees benefits for early retirement, and pushed a number of fruitful water bills.

Many hold chairmanship, which automatically give them powerful influence.

In the Senate, this includes Sens. J. Marsden Williams, chairman of the Senate Natural Resources and Environment Committee; and Dane Watkins, chairman of Agricultural Affairs Committee.

Sen. Richard A. Egbert, D-Teton, holds respect as dean of the Legislature, with 30 years service, and Sen. Israel Merrill, D-Blackfoot, was the only one from Eastern Idaho serving in leadership, as the Democratic caucus chairman.

The other senators, Vearl Crystal, R-Rigby, and Mark Ricks, R-Rexburg, are comparative newcomers, but Crystal was especially helpful in writing tax legislation, as result of his long service as Jefferson County assessor.

In the House, chairmen were Reps. John O. Sessions, R-Driggs, of the House Transportation Committee; Elaine Kearnes of R-Idaho Falls, of Health and Welfare Committee; Doyle C. Miner, R-St.

Anthony, of the Transportation Committee.

long-discussed certificate of need bill passed but, also was instrumental in helping to enact numerous health bills and defeating those which hardly were of worthy nature.

The hard-working Miner likely carried the heaviest load, seeking to hammer out appropriations that fit the needs of the state, yet keep within a tight budget.

Rep. Wendell Miller, D-Idaho Falls, was particularly effective as the nuclear champion in pushing through memorials for development of nuclear power and in stopping another measure that would hamper storage of nuclear waste at the INEL.

Reps. Ray E. Infanger, R-Salmon, as a member of the House Appropriation Committee; and Wayne E. Tibbitts, R-Lorenzo, who also was prominent in working on water projects, also were among the most dedicated legislators.

The two neophytes are Reps. Gary Paxman, R-Idaho Falls, and Raymond Parks, R-Blackfoot, who are just learning the ropes. Paxman earned a rather dubious distinction along with Tibbitts and Infanger, as the only East Idaho state representative to vote against the gas tax to produce money to improve highways, particularly those in Eastern Idaho, in their own back yard.



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Top East Idaho legislators

BOISE — Among the East Idaho legislators who are influential during the current session of the Idaho Legislature are seated in front, Reps. John O. Sessions, chairman of the House Transportation Committee, and at rear standing, Linden B. Bateman, R-Idaho Falls, who spearheaded water projects and public employee legislation; Elaine Kearnes, R-Idaho Falls, chairman of the House Health and Education Committee; Doyle C. Miner, R-St. Anthony, chairman of the

House Appropriation Committee; Darwin L. Young, R-Blackfoot, who took a prominent hand in writing the 1 Percent Initiative implementation bills; Melvin Hammond, D-Rexburg, former minority leader and a leading Democratic voice; and Wendell Miller, D-Idaho Falls, known as the nuclear champion who successfully sponsored nuclear legislation and led in defeat of anti-nuclear bills.