

Lawmakers against new sess

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Eastern Idaho legislators Friday called the 47th Idaho legislative session the most difficult and frustrating they have ever attended.

The Legislature adjourned Thursday night.

They also generally agreed they had approved the maximum amount of funding possible for state agencies.

They also predicted a special session threatened by Gov. John V. Evans, primarily to get more funding for education, will not produce any increased appropriation.

All of the lawmakers said they had approved the largest tax increase ever — about \$140 million — to fund state government and overcome \$70 million shortfalls in the 1983 fiscal year ending June 30 and 1984 fiscal year beginning July 1.

The biggest revenue-raising measure was the 1½-cent sales tax increase scheduled to terminate June 30, 1984. It should generate about \$87 million.

Most labeled a new law providing for tougher drunken driving penalties, and the 2-cent gas tax increase as among the most noteworthy legislation. However, there were many other bills that aroused less emotion that will help the state.

Legislators agreed one of the sessions' biggest disappointments was failure to enact a bill subordinating Idaho Power Co.'s water rights to those of irrigators. They vowed the issue will be handled in a special session if one is called, or in the next regular session in January.

They said the Republican-dominated Legislature compromised by upping its budget recommendations from \$395 million at the start to the \$451.6 million figure adopted Thursday evening. They noted Evans trimmed his budget request from \$475 million to \$460 million.

The Republican leadership met with Evans Friday morning in an effort to dissuade him from calling a special session, insisting funding will not be increased, said Senate President Pro Tem Jim Risch, R-Boise; Senate Majority Leader Mark G. Ricks, R-Rexburg; House Majority Caucus Chairman Linden B. Bateman, R-Idaho Falls, and House Minority Leader Melvin Hammond, D-Rexburg.

"It was the toughest session I have ever attended in my nine years," said Risch. "I think we did fine in holding the appropriation to \$14 million less than appropriated last year but at the same time public schools will receive more than in the history of education. We acted reasonably throughout the session.

We certainly are urging the governor not to call a special session. He will not get any more in the budget."

Ricks said, "I felt good about this session. We passed the major pieces of legislation that were needed. There was cooperation among all of the leadership and parties in both chambers.

"I'm satisfied with the budget. We increased taxes about \$134 million, I think, and about \$75 million or more in sales tax. I understand this comes out to \$14.50 per man, woman and child in Idaho."

He said he regrets water rights legislation and a bill raising the drinking age to 21 did not pass.

"I think we did the best we could," said Hammond. "I guess the governor will do what he thinks he has to do. I would have liked to have seen more money for public education. You know, we spent 35-40 days on the 1983 budget before we could turn to 1984.

Bateman said he carried a letter signed by all Republican senators and 47 of 51 Republican representatives to the governor Thursday afternoon stating they will not vote for a further budget increase. The letter, he said, noted revenue was increased \$138.5 million, including \$87 million in sales taxes; \$12 million in unemployment compensa-

tion; \$11 million to comply with the Internal Revenue Service Code; \$12 million in loss carrybacks; and smaller amounts in other measures.

"I think we showed a spirit of compromise in coming up from \$395 million to \$451.6 million," said Bateman.

Bateman said although his bill to raise the drinking age to 21 failed in the Senate, there was legislation providing tough penalties for young drivers, including loss of a driver's licenses for serious violations.

Rep. John O. Sessions, R-Driggs, House Transportation Committee chairman, said "I think we accomplished what we set out to do and we did it in a reasonable manner considering the state of the economy."

He said he was pleased that the 2-cent gas tax increase passed, allowing continued maintenance of Idaho's highways. He said reducing it from 3 cents meant the loss of \$21 million in federal matching funds. However, the increase permits the state to match about \$37 million in federal money.

Sen. Dane Watkins, R-Idaho Falls, chairman of the Senate Local Government and Taxation committee, said "it was a difficult session, but under trying conditions a consensus was developed. I hope the

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