

# East Idaho legislators views closely followed

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As has been the case in the past, the conservative predictions and views of East Idaho legislators were closely followed by the Idaho Legislature now in the throes of winding up.

A series of 15 articles were written in the Post-Register preceding the start of this session in which the legislators were asked their sentiments on some of the salient measures that likely would be acted on. With few exceptions, their views dominated the legislature.

After considerable squabbling, as expected, for implementing the 1 Percent Tax Initiative, the legislature merely settled for extending the freeze another year, allowing a 6 percent growth factor.

There were a dozen bills on the implementation but when it came down to seeking to resolve the various assessments, appraisals and taxing procedures, the lawmakers could not come up with an agreement.

The legislators spent most of the session wrestling with this topic, but in the end they finished on square one — extending the freeze.

It was their way for seeking to help the local units of governments because no other proposals — and there were many — could satisfy everybody, something that had been anticipated.

Rep. Doyle C. Miner, R-St. Anthony, chairman of the House Appropriation Committee, accurately said before start of the session that his discussions with many legislators indicated a budget freeze for another year.

Rep. Wayne E. Tibbitts, R-Lorenzo, suggested raising the sales tax a fraction and diverting it to local units of government but this received less than a warm reception.

Also as forecast, after the smoke cleared there was no measure to give the cities and counties a local option as a safety valve.

Most believed public education would get about 10 percent increase, or a compromise between the Idaho Education Association request for 13.2 percent and the governor's recommendation of 8.8 percent. Most legislators guessed it would be about 10 percent. It wound up with a 10.7 percent hike.

The governor and the Department of Transportation wanted \$39 million for highways but most legislators said they believed this would be scaled down to possibly \$10 million. It did slightly better which was a mild surprise. It totaled about \$17 million from a 2 cent state gas tax hike and increase on the truck ton mileage fees.

Most believed the state public employees would get a 10 percent salary increase as compared to their request for 13 percent. It didn't do that well and their increase was figured at 8.5 percent. The employees

mostly served as pawns in political jockeying between the governor and the Republican leadership.

**Skiping to other issues as predicted, they refused to create a full-fledged Department of Energy and almost dismantled the Office of Energy but finally did give it some funding; no change in the Idaho Water Plan which meets general approval; opposed transfer of the state income tax to the IRS; and badly slashed health and welfare programs.**

A mild surprise was the passage of a watered-down certificate of need but this came about by the doctors and hospitals removing their objections as the legislation was altered while the senior citizens strongly backed the measure. Some legislators agreed beforehand such a compromise measure might pass, and indeed it was, by comfortable margins. It ended a long four-year fight to do this.

The legislators were successful in passing by huge majorities legislation and memorials that favored development of nuclear power and even shipment of radioactive WASTES to the INEL for processing. They also, by an overwhelming margin, defeated a bill that called for banning shipments of radioactive waste. The East Idaho legislators correctly predicted this.

As anticipated, they passed a Sagebrush Rebellion resolution

by top heavy margins and kept buried in committee any proposal that would take the Legislature's power to implement initiatives and leave it to a vote of the people.

Most didn't feel there would be any minimum streamflow legislation, but surprisingly there was some passed for several streams, including trout-famous Silver Creek in Blaine County.

This was due largely to the efforts of the highly respected Rep. Vard Chatburn, R-Albion, who views on water matters are generally followed.

Predictions water quality would be lowered were accurate.

Also of interest on issues that developed after the session started, they passed the important Idaho Housing Agency Bill that gives it authority to loan \$400 million instead of \$200 million, and changed the school formula which makes it more equitable and decrees no school district will get less than an 8 percent increase over last year's budget.

Most predicted a budget of about \$400 million, compared to the governor's recommendation about \$408 million. These figures aren't definitely settled but it looks like it will total about \$405 million after all the agency budgets are finally approved.



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