

Chances hike for call of special session

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Before the 4th District Court acted adversely on a Medicaid patient case, threats by Gov. John V. Evans that he would call a special session of the Idaho Legislature could have been taken lightly.

Now the possibility takes on a stronger tone because the ruling means the Department of Health and Welfare may need to pay \$4 million for the balance of this fiscal year and an estimated \$6 million more for the 1981 fiscal year beginning July 1.

The judge struck down a DHW attempt to curtail payments to Idaho nursing homes for Medicaid patients. It ruled the state must pay "full reasonable cost" of nursing home care which is not covered by federal government payments.

Also of serious nature are payments for aid to dependent children, because with no state help these payments could stop.

If the session is called, it likely would be after the May 27 primary.

This special session likely would have been unnecessary if the bill to delete the requirement that the state pay the "full reasonable cost" of nursing home care for Medicaid patients had been approved by the House Health and Welfare Committee.

From this far East Idaho view, however, it doesn't appear probable the Republican-controlled Legislature will change its mind on most of the other proposals the governor may want enacted.

This has been made clear by the three Republican leaders, Senate President Pro Tem Reed Budge, R-Soda Springs, who doesn't even speak with the governor; Senate Majority Leader James Risch, R-Boise; and House Speaker Ralph Olmstead, R-Twin Falls.

It would be the same legislators who repulsed him during the regular session. Also a number may need to campaign for the May 27 primary, and the financing just isn't that serious.

The cuts in the Department of Health and Welfare are admittedly deep and painful, the additional revenue for state highway maintenance now can wait a year, and even the funding for the legislative staff can be provided by shifting appropriations for the Legislature.

This latter issue likely will be settled after the Legislative Council meets Friday.

The Legislature left March 31

with bitter feelings and to go back for a special session next month will reopen old wounds.

Another serious issue, is the Legislature's cut of seven members under the governor's office, and the governor, in turn, vetoing appropriations that supposedly reduces 47 members of the Legislative Council, Legislative Auditor and Legislative Fiscal Office after end of the fiscal year June 30.

Olmstead said the three legislative staff offices may be funded on a tight basis from regular legislative appropriations until the 46th regular session convenes in January. It could mean some loss in personnel, however.

The governor's staff cuts are not in his office but rather in budget and planning. There are existing vacancies so that the personnel cut would be five persons or less.

Evans also would like to beef up the Office of Energy but the leadership — not the moderate Republicans — strongly oppose this. The controversial office director, Robert Lenaghan, is not affected as his funding comes from the Pacific Northwest Planning Council funding. Evans does object to no state funding for administration, terming this situation a "headless horseman."

The governor last year also threatened to call a special session because of the Legislature's failure to enact local option laws for cities.

The Legislature refused to do this again this year but the governor has been silent, possibly because the cities feel they face a hostile Legislature and hope a more friendly one can be elected for next year.

Digging back in the records, there have been 18 special sessions, but these were called immediately following the regular session and took place when the Legislature only met every two years.

The only exceptions were two special sessions in July 1935 for a total of seven days, another in August 1961, for reapportionment, for two days, and another in July 1964, also for reapportionment, for four days.