

Leroy strives to update Idaho legal system

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BOISE — Attorney General David Leroy said he has elaborate plans to strengthen the legal system in Idaho but he is less than confident it will be

approved by the Idaho Legislature.

His pet bill is one that will bring most of the state attorneys under his jurisdiction.

Leroy is looking at House Bill 368 that would include more of

the state attorneys but would except those attorneys under the governor's office in hopes it would discourage a veto. If it passes the Legislature, signs indicate the governor will veto it.

Leroy said there are 83 attorneys working for state government, including 54 under the attorney general's office in Boise. Under the bill, it would place eight more attorneys under Leroy's jurisdiction. They are presently assigned to the Department of Law Enforcement, Industrial Commission and Transportation Department.

Leroy contends the proposal would increase efficiency among attorneys working for the state besides saving \$100,000 to \$200,000 in extra legal fees.

The bill passed the House and is now under consideration for amendments in the Senate State Affairs Committee.

Leroy said more than 30 states have such a consolidated attorney system.

Also under consideration are three other bills relating to the judiciary.

One calls for an interim study commission on the numbers to serve on the Supreme Court and

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appellate court; another proposed by his office for creation of an appellate court that would handle a type of cases between the district and Supreme Court, leaving it to the Supreme Court what it wants to handle; and a third bill would create and outline duties of local justices in the various regions and would give the Supreme Court the authority to decide which cases should be booted up to appellate jurisdiction.

Leroy said that in all he has six bills he is sponsoring, most of them of minor nature. He also has drafted bills on laws that might affect the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory and other federal property, the 1 Percent Tax Initiative, and the Sagebrush Rebellion.

"We seek to operate our office, much as in private practice, to provide service," said Leroy. "We don't set political policies."