

Most legislators favor assistance for cities

(Editor's note: This is the 10th in a series of 16 articles giving the views of East Idaho legislators on the salient issues shaping up for the coming session).

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The vast majority of East Idaho legislators favor giving assistance to cities but they split on giving authority on local option tax.

Rep. Wayne L. Tibbitts, R-Lorenzo, first proposed that 1 percent of the existing sales tax be diverted to cities and counties on a population basis.

He said he is opposed to local taxes per se, but added the cities and counties need help badly and this is one way it can be done. It would give them some \$30 million help, he noted.

Rep. Doyle C. Miner, R-St. Anthony, co-chairman of the Joint Finance Appropriation Committee, which could have a large voice in enacting such type of legislation, predicted there would be no general local option tax, except maybe a restricted one, such as enacted for the small tourist cities of Ketchum, Sun Valley and McCall.

"We might be able to have such a tax in another year," said Miner, himself a former longtime city councilman at St. Anthony.

Sen. Dane Watkins, R-Idaho Falls, ranking majority member of the Senate Local Government and Taxation Committee, merely stated "on matters concerning cities and counties, I strongly support local control" but did not mention local option or other specifics.

Another member of this committee, Sen. Vearl Crystal, R-Rigby, said he opposed any additional taxes until the Legislature has all the answers to the 1 Percent Tax Initiative. He said he has always advocated more home rule and local control as a matter of principle, however.

Rep. Linden B. Bateman, R-Iona, a member of the House Local Government Committee, said he supported the basic home rule philosophy, adding "government should be kept as close to the people as practical.

"I would support some form of local option income tax if it was approved by the people in a referendum. That type of tax is much more fair than property tax."

member of the House Government Committee, J. Paxman, commented that the concept was part of the state and needs its legislative approval.

Expressing one of the strong oppositions was Rep. Ray Infanger, R-Salmon, who said "most of our constituents feel the local units now have enough home rules, taxes and powers. I am against 1 percent sales tax increase earmarked for cities and counties at this time."

He reiterated the 1 Percent Initiative should be implemented the coming year, not extended as some suggest.

Reps. Kurt L. Johnson, R-Idaho Falls; Elaine Kearnes, R-Idaho Falls; Melvin Hammond, D-Rexburg; and Sen. Israel Merrill, D-Blackfoot, indicated favoring local option taxing authority for cities if it is possible, agreeing these local units of government need help.

Mrs. Kearnes expressed perhaps the strongest backing, saying "I have always voted for this. I trust the cities and counties to make their decision and giving them that right."

Sen. J. Marsden Williams, R-

Idaho Falls, said he favored extending this rights only in instances to recreation areas, believing the cities in other respects are not ready for local options yet.

Rep. Darwin Young, R-Blackfoot, who had a key hand in writing legislation implementing the 1 Percent in the 1979 session, said "I don't favor increasing the sales tax or local option tax."

Also expressing opposition was Rep. John O. Sessions, R-Driggs, who commented "cities already have authority for home rule, planning and zoning. I don't know of a need to

broaden these powers at the present time. I'm undecided at this time whether or not to support a 1 percent sales tax increase for cities and counties."

But Rep. C. Wendell Miller, D-Idaho Falls, said flatly that cities should have more home rule.

"Inasmuch as local option taxes were part of the 1 Percent Initiative, they should be passed but I feel a reluctance on the part of legislators to pass these," he said. "I don't favor increasing the sales tax at this time until we know the necessity of it."