

Legislative limelights . . .

Legislative partisan bickering expensive

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BOISE — Controversies between Democratic Gov. John V. Evans and the Republican leadership, primarily the Senate, is costing people of Idaho \$14,000 a day.

This session, most observers agree, should have ended Saturday, March 8, after 62 days, but the bickering over funding of state agencies has unnecessarily prolonged the proceedings.

Most agree now this session can't end before March 22, which is 76 days, the fourth longest in history, or 14 days beyond what it should have been. By this reckoning the hassle is costing people of Idaho close to \$200,000 extra, not to mention frayed tempers and the time and money lost to many lawmakers by serving an extra two weeks.

Evans recommended a general fund budget of \$408 million, including the \$18 million surplus. Most of the lawmakers agree the Legislature will come close to this figure, although the Republican leadership at one time believed it could slash this by \$10 million. It revised these figures to \$6 million and now most admit the financial outlay will come within \$3 million of Evans' figures, and it would not be a surprise if it went slightly over.

After first hand overview of the governor and the Legislature and talking closely with the contending sides in Boise the past week, it would appear there is some right and considerable wrong all around.

These people are playing with the destiny and welfare of the state and there should be no room for their own personal

ego.

In looking over the entire picture, both the governor and Legislature are close in the amount of appropriations that could be funded. The Joint Finance Appropriation Committee is slicing state agencies too thin. It will need to review these budgets and give a more generous portion, or face the wrath of the voters when essential health, welfare, education and many other services will be eliminated or drastically curtailed on many fronts.

The governor could have used more restraint in reasoning with the Republican leaders in their weekly leadership breakfasts, rather than what some of his critics said was using strong pressure tactics.

Senate President Pro Tem Reed Budge, R-Soda Springs, accused the governor of showing "tantrums" in the leadership breakfasts but others say this is hardly correct. They say the governor has been emphatic in discussing issues, sometimes waving papers and finger pointing, but has been well in control of himself.

Most fault Budge for boycotting the meetings when all of the other leaders attend. They say it hampers a dialogue between the executive and legislative branch.

Both Evans and Budge acknowledge Evans has written a letter to Budge inviting him back to the leadership meetings. This happened a couple of weeks ago and Budge said he has not replied, but may do so.

It would appear compromises must be attained on the appropriations, much as has happened in the past. The

sooner this takes place, the better.

Actually there has been little partisan controversy in the Legislature, most of the issues finding both Republicans and Democrats frequently crossing party lines.

In some cases, it has been usual in the House for some 15 to 20 Republican moderates joining 20 Democrats on some issues that were considered more of progressive nature, rather than political.

Just last week, 17 Republicans joined 20 Democrats in rejecting a leadership attempt to virtually dismantle the Office of Energy by diverting its funding authority to other state agencies. This move was rejected by the moderate-Democratic faction 37-33 and somewhat similar votes have taken place on other similar issues.

Evans holds a tremendous advantage as his term doesn't expire until 1982 while all 105 legislators must stand re-election.

Nearly all are expected to run except Sen. Richard High, R-Twin Falls; and Reps. Gary Ingram, R-Coeur d'Alene; Ronald Harlow, D-Lewiston, and Herbert G. Fitz, R-New Meadows.

A number of others are considering such a step but unless they say they emphatically won't run, it can be assumed they will. Those who say they are thinking of stepping aside but probably won't are Sens. James A. Leese, D-Pocatello; and Ron Twilegar, D-Boise; and Reps. Joe Wagner, D-Lewiston; and Wayne E. Tibbitts, R-Lorenzo. Most hinge their withdrawal on whether replacements they feel are satisfactory will compete.