

legislative limelights . . .

Warm relations cool in Idaho Legislature

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By BEN J. PLASTINO
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BOISE — That time when the warm relationship in the Idaho legislature begins to evaporate as arrived under the marble dome of the State Capitol.

It's been sweetness and light, generally, for most of the past two months, which is longer than usual, but tempers now begin to fly as the lawmakers strive for adjournment in two or three weeks.

Senate President Pro Tem Reed Budge's boycott of Evans' weekly legislative breakfasts vividly reflects the deepening rift.

This time the increasing strained relations exist between Democratic Gov. John V. Evans and the Republican leadership in both Senate and House. Their main beef is over funding for the state public employees, the energy program, revenue sharing and how to best implement the 1 Percent Tax Initiative.

The Republican leadership is resisting the governor's recommendations for a full-fledged Department of Energy, or at least increased funding, for the existing Office of Energy; has agreed to about an 8.5 percent salary increase for the 13,000 state workers for \$14.5 million but wants to underfund them at \$10 million; and wants to divert some \$6 million or more for tax relief, rather than adequately fund the state agencies.

There's also an argument over diverting some of the surplus, which the Republicans call "revenue sharing" to the cities and counties.

Of course this sort of situation always develops in the dying days of the Legislature, especially when the Legislature and governor are of different parties. Yet, even when they are of the same parties, there has been a traditional fight between the executive and legislative branches every time. Republican governors Robert E. Smylie and Don Samuelson had just as much trouble with the Republican legislators as did Democrats Cecil D. Andrus and now Evans.

At the start of the session, political observers, including this one, believed they should wind up the session in 60 days or perhaps a little longer. This session is now in its 55th day and most agree it will battle for at least two weeks more, and more likely three weeks. That would send the session to 76 days, one of the longest in the Legislature's history. Last year's session lasted 78 days, the third longest.

In a showdown fight between the governor and the leadership, the people are the losers.

That's because it extends the length of the session which costs more than \$14,000 daily, besides the expenses incurred in often enacting bad legislation or no legislation where needed as part of partisan retaliations. The Legislature appropriation is \$1.4 million for the year but most is spent during the session.

The governor holds the whip hand in this 1980 election year as he does not stand for re-election for two more years while all 105 must face the voters, 70 of them Republicans and only 35 as Democrats.

The governor also holds veto powers, and he can keep the legislators in session until they enact laws that meet his approval. In such a hassle, they generally reach a compromise.

Politics runs rife in the legislative body, because with few exceptions, the legislators plan to run for re-election. These include all 18 in East Idaho, six in the Senate and 12 in the House.

House Speaker Ralph Olmsstead and Lt. Gov. Philip E. Batt are looking at the 1982 governor's race. House Majority Leader Walter E. Little and Senate President Pro Tem Reed Budge also talk about seeking higher offices, but neither have done so, and most of their colleagues do not consider them serious contenders. Sen. Larry Craig, Midvale, seeks the First District congressional seat.

Risch minimizes legislative tilt

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By BEN J. PLASTINO

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BOISE — Senate Majority Leader James Risch said Tuesday the present Idaho legislative hassle is not as serious as it appears on the surface.

"I think the logjam is not as bad as some people believe because we are not hung up on big issues," he said.

Risch said there are only two major issues and both can be solved without too much difficulty. They are (1) balancing the spending and allocating to the state agencies; and (2) finishing the orderly implementation of the 1 Percent Tax Initiative.

"I think we are close to accomplishing both of these," he said. "When this happens the session will be over. Actually we are further along in this session than we have been in

most times of the past."

Risch said the Joint Finance Appropriation Committee has had a difficult job, putting in long hours during most of the session.

He said he had hoped the session could finish by Saturday but acknowledges it likely won't be until March 21.

Risch said he suspects the general fund will be about \$405 million, which would be some \$3 million under the governor's recommended outlay of \$408 million.

"I think it would be well to have about \$3 million in surplus to have it in reserve in case the revenue projections for the coming fiscal year don't reach expectations," he said.

Risch pointed out the public schools will get about \$284 million in funds, including \$164 million from the general fund.