

Risch minimizes legislative tilt

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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.