

# Senate leader backs tax initiative repeal

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Senate Minority Leader Ron J. Twilegar, D-Boise, said he thought the controversial 1 Percent Tax Initiative should be repealed.

"The problem goes back to the Legislature's failure to address itself to the inequities in the tax system of the state," said Twilegar, Boise attorney who was elected to head the Senate Democrats, replacing the veteran Sen. Cy C. Chase, D-St. Maries.

Twilegar contended the Legislature failed to correct the inequities existing in the state's taxing system.

He then said the situation was further complicated by the fact that those sponsoring the initiative "unfortunately apparently didn't have the technical background to do this properly. Consequently, we got a bad law."

Twilegar said those sponsoring the tax initiative were actually large property owners and as a result the average property owner was hoodwinked in voting for something which was not to his best interest as shown by his increase in taxes.

Twilegar hastened to add that he has always supported property tax relief but the Legislature failed in its duties in doing this and in attempting to implement the initiative.

Twilegar, who is expected to furnish fiery rhetorics in his floor exchanges with another sharp-tongued Boise attorney, Republican Senate Majority Leader James Risch, said he generally is opposed to any general fund tax increase, unless one should be critically needed but this does not at present appear to be the case.

Gov. John V. Evans' general fund budget of \$452 million was considered conservative by Twilegar, adding this would

hinge on the revenue projection.

He noted the budget is a substantial boost from the \$406 million approved last year but this was reduced to about \$380 million because of the 3.85 percent holdback and other cuts.

"While we are talking about cutting costs it might be a good idea for the Legislature to reduce its own appropriation," Twilegar said.

Twilegar said he favors making the Homestead Exemption Act which was sponsored by the

Democrats as permanent and also making it easier to administer. He added he liked the suggestion of Sen. Mark Ricks, R-Rexburg, that it be automatically done by the county assessor, rather than homeowners apply as was the case last year.

"It should be made easier and I like this," said Twilegar.

Twilegar said he also favors increased highway funding to solve the problem of not allowing the state highways to deteriorate but said he would have to

see proposals along this line. He indicated he would not be opposed to a state gas tax and other vehicle fee increases to achieve this end.

On higher education, he said he favors a balanced budget and emphasized that there is no program that should not be subject to changes if deemed necessary.

"If we had a stronger Board of Education, there could have been some consolidations and savings in administration," said Twilegar. "Duplications could be avoided and cost-saving practices placed in force."

Twilegar said he thought Evans' 6.5 percent salary increase recommendations for public employees and 7.5 percent for teachers is fair in view of the tight financial picture.

In other matters, he said he strongly favors giving cities more home rule, pointing out he sponsored a bill in the last session which passed the Senate and narrowly failed in the

House. He said he plans to try again this year and looks for enactment.

He termed the so-called Sagebrush Rebellion "a farce" as evidenced so far. He predicted it will be rejected by the people because it is an attempted land grab by vested interests at the expense of the public.

He said he also would favor fee increase if needed by the Fish and Game Department, and shouted an emphatic "no" to the Right to Work proposal.

Twilegar said he sponsored the law, which designated the May preferential primary but that he would not be opposed to changing his position now. He said he feels it may be better to move the primary to later in the year, probably for early September to avoid the long campaign.

Twilegar, an attorney, is primarily engaged in business enterprises and was re-elected to his fourth term. He has formerly served in leadership.



Ron J. Twilegar  
Senate minority leader