

# March 17 1988 38th Idaho Legislature to reconvene

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A reunion of the 38th Idaho Legislature of 1965-66 next Saturday night at Boise brings attention to the woeful lack of leadership in most recent sessions, including the 48th which adjourned Wednesday.

The reunion, unprecedented by any legislative class, recognizes the 20th anniversary of the signing into law of the 3 percent sales tax by former Gov. Robert E. Smylie. It will be a gathering of some of the most progressive legislators and leaders to ever serve in state government.

It set the pace 20 years ago for tremendous advances in education as result of the sales tax, the first time such a levy was ever enacted in the state. It was said then it would serve the state well for 20 years and indeed it has almost up to the present time.

Within the last two or three years, however, revenue has been inadequate and state government — including education — has been crippled.

This Legislature, just as the ones two and three years before it, did not meet the challenges to keep state government, of which education accounts for nearly three-fourths of the spending, moving in a progressive direction.

That session in 1965-66 functioned just before reapportionment was instituted. It had 123 members, close to the 126 of the present session.

The reunion is expected to draw the most outstanding political leaders in the state. It will take place at the Crystal Ballroom of the former Boise Hotel.

Among the luminaries expected are Smylie and two other former governors, Don Samuelson and Cecil D. Andrus, both of whom served in the State Senate 20 years ago, and the present governor, John V. Evans.

Included in the invitation list are those who have continued to serve the Legislature since 1965. They include Sen. Walter Yarbrough, R-Grand View; and Reps. J. Vard Chatburn, R-Albion; Walter E. Little, R-New Plymouth; and Harold Reid, D-Craigmont.

Also from this illustrious group and earlier are U.S. Sen. James A. McClure; former U.S. Congressman Orval Hansen, Idaho Falls; U.S. District Judge Harold Ryan, Boise; Idaho Supreme Court Justice Robert Huntley, Pocatello, and Secretary of State Pete T. Cenarrusa, Boise, then House speaker.

About 35 of the 1965-66 legislators have died.

Senators at that time from east Idaho were Joseph L. Ausich, D-Mackay; Burns J. Beal, R-Moore; Richard A. Egbert, D-Tetonia; James Ellsworth, R-Leadore; Harry H. Harn, R-Dubois; Kit-chener E. Head, R-Driggs; Ray W. Rigby, D-Rexburg; J. Cecil Sandberg, D-Blackfoot; Harvey Schwendiman, R-St. Anthony; Wayne E. Tibbitts, D-Lorenzo; and Jack A. Wood Jr., D-Idaho Falls.

State representatives were Eugene L. Bush, R-Idaho Falls; Wilbert Cammack, D-Blackfoot; Jack W. Carey, R-Idaho Falls; William M. Frome, D-St. Anthony; Orval Hansen, R-Idaho Falls; Pat K. Harwood, R-Rigby; Aden Hyde, R-Idaho Falls; Charles D. Jones, D-Moore; Elmer C. Leonardson, R-Dubois; Leland Lindburg, D-Mackay; Karl L. Klinger, R-Rexburg; Helen McKinney, R-Salmon; Arvil Millar, R-Shelley; Don Pieper, D-Idaho Falls; and Roy Stroschein, D-Sterling.

Egbert was the Senate assistant minority floor leader at the time. Hansen, Bush, Pieper, Ellsworth, and Rigby, later rose to floor leadership.

The sales tax dominated the 1965 session. Smylie sponsored a larger budget than was believed possible, and requested the sales tax to balance the revenue and also provide tax relief.

The session lasted 74 days, to that time one of the longest in history. The House, unlike recent years, was more liberal and progressive and passed the high appropriation, while the Senate lagged along. Eventually, the Senate passed the sales tax by eight votes and set a new high record of achievement for state government and education. The Senate also approved, what was then called, a uniform-property-tax assessment bill, which was somewhat of a property tax reform.

A group known as Forward Idaho was formed to help get the sales tax law approved by the voters in the 1966 referendum. All segments of Idaho joined to help, including education, labor, farmers and businesses, and the rank and file of home owners.

Funding for all education jumped from \$92.7 million in 1965-67 to a whopping \$153.9 million in 1969-71, solving the education funding almost until the present time. The education funding now is \$304 million for one year, but that amount doesn't go nearly as far as it once did.

Harwood, now president of the Boise-based Idaho Association of Commerce and Industry, is highly enthusiastic when he talks of the 1965 session. He termed it the greatest he has ever seen, and he has been close to the Legislature scene at Boise the past 20 years. Harwood, who operated a service station in Idaho Falls, served while living in Rigby.

In those days, the legislators generally gathered after the daily session in the old Lampost at the old Boise Hotel, now converted largely to offices. There was lots of hilarity and goodwill among lawmakers of that era. It was said much of the beneficial legislation was concocted in those social evening surroundings.

The congenial sociability of those days contrasts sharply with the drudgery of today, which might explain part of the reason the Legislatures have been mostly stodgy and mediocre in recent years.