

Some Idaho legislators stand out

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Every year, certain legislators stand out during the Idaho legislative session because of their performances and the influence they exert on their colleagues.

This year's session was no exception. The 48th Idaho Legislature likely was not considered outstanding; but despite its dismal record on funding, particularly for education, it enacted some **Rep. John Sessions** noteworthy legislation.

Among the major measures enacted were: a package of six water rights bills; creation of a Department of Commerce; the Indoor Clear Air Act; required reporting of child abuse; a \$1,000-a-year increase in compensation for legislators as recommended by the Idaho Compensation Commission; allowing cities to hold runoff elections if no candidate for mayor receives a majority of the vote; state money for recounts in close statewide races; requiring a permit for hazardous waste sites; increase in bonding for reclamation projects; and creation of a fund providing money for the care of abused children.

There were many other important measures whose values are open to question. These include: funding of



only \$304 million for public education and \$88 million for higher education; enactment of a right-to-work law; repeal of the Idaho Davis-Bacon Act, and freezing state employees' salaries.

The Legislature considered 1,038 measures, passing 311, slightly below the 334 passed in 1984.

Gov. John V. Evans, many leading legislators, some members of the media, lobbyists and political observers indicate that they believe some eastern Idaho legislators, who are all Republicans, were among the outstanding ones.

As usual, Rep. John O. Sessions of Driggs turned in a sterling performance. He helped spearhead enactment of the Department of Commerce, faithfully backed increased education appropriations, and was instrumental in considering vehicle registration and highway legislation as House Transportation Committee chairman.

Over the years the soft-spoken and highly respected Sessions is rated by most observers as one of the most effective legislators in the state.

Then there was Rep. Linden Bate-man of Idaho Falls, chairman of the House Republican Caucus, who was influential in helping determine House Republican policies. He also loyally backed higher education funding, splitting with his own leadership on this issue. He also pushed for state-enforced morals, narrowly missing in the Senate to raise the drinking age from 19 to 21, and was a leading opponent against lottery

which was torpedoed in the House.

Two freshmen stamped themselves as lawmakers to watch. They are Sen. Mike Crapo of Idaho Falls, who many believe will attain leadership as he becomes more aggressive; and Rep. Reed Hansen of Idaho Falls, who with Sessions was the only progressive one from eastern Idaho in the House to vote for the Department of Commerce. He was also a leader in pushing for more education funding and took a leading role in approval of the Swan Falls water rights adjudication measure.

Crapo may in the future emulate his late brother, Terry Crapo, who observers believed was one of the most outstanding House majority leaders to ever serve in the Legislature.

Evans named Hansen and Bate-man as among the outstanding legislators.

Another who may also shine is Rep. Golden Linford, Rexburg, who was a swing vote in the influential House Revenue and Taxation Committee.

Also others who by virtue of their positions exerted influence were Senate Majority Leader Mark Ricks, Rexburg, one of the hardest-working lawmakers in the session; Assistant Majority Leader Vearl Crystal, Lewisville, who assisted in setting Senate majority policies; and Sen. Dane Watkins, Idaho Falls, chairman of the Senate Local Government and Taxation Committee.

Then there is Rep. J. C. Chadband, Idaho Falls, who established himself

as a maverick among his peers in leading losing fights. These included seeking to transfer the state liquor stores to the private sector, tax exemption for children attending private schools that could have made the public school system optional, and a leading opponent for creating the Department of Commerce.

Rep. Stan Hawkins, Ucon, as a first term, did well in sponsoring legislation to reduce the sales tax for the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory.

Sen. Dwight Horsch, D-Aberdeen, who served three terms in the House, commanded respect in his scholarly debates while serving his first term in the upper chamber.

Watkins won a rather notorious record for burying legislation in his committee and was a faithful worker for corporations. He did help ramrod the INEL sales tax exemption bill. Among the measures he prevented from getting floor action was the important local tax option bill.

Rep. Preston Brimhall, Idaho Falls, won less than favorable attention by calling for required teaching of creationism and was a leading advocate for lower education funding and ultra conservative policies.

Most of the other eastern Idahoans followed a rather rigid conservative line. They believed — with reasons — that's what their constituents wanted them to do.

It was that kind of Legislature but it did earn a "B" rating from the governor, the highest since he has held office.