

Legislative limelights . . .

Rift deepens between governor, GOP leaders

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BOISE — Although Republicans and Democrats are getting along reasonably well during the present legislative session, the situation between Democratic Gov. John V. Evans and Republican leaders is something else.

The prime antagonists of the embattled governor are Senate President Pro Tem Reed Budge, Soda Springs, Senate Majority Leader Jim E. Risch, Boise; House Speaker Ralph Olmstead, Twin Falls, and House Majority Leader Walter E. Little, New Plymouth.

The Republicans hold the whiphand in controlling the House 50-20 and the Senate 19-16. But Evans can wield a big veto stamp. The Republicans have the two-thirds margin in the House for override but the Senate Democrats can sustain a veto.

The troubles started earlier in the session when the Republican leadership left little doubt it doesn't intend to fund a Department of Energy.

Differences also have cropped up in two other sectors, where it appeared both the governor and the Republican leadership had about the same appropriation figures.

The Republicans agreed with the governor's recommendations for about 8.5 percent increases for public schools, meaning primarily teachers' salaries; and for state public employees.

It wasn't that simple.

The Republican leadership has agreed on about 8.5 percent increase, plus hospital benefits and mental health program. This would have taken about \$14 million but the Republican leadership decided only about \$10 million will be available.

The Democrats protested that this underfunding could mean a loss of at least 200 state positions and maybe even double that amount, seriously crippling state service.

Regarding teacher salaries, where the differences also appeared nonexistent, Republicans generally have agreed on an 8.5 percent salary increase but 10.9 percent for capital outlay and 10 percent for operation. This would average out near 8.8.

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This plan is intended to bolster the Republican's claims they are constantly appropriating more money for public schools than the governor recommended.

During the time following the appearances of some 3,500 teachers at Boise Feb. 1 to dramatize their demand for a 13.2 percent increase, the governor blamed the Republicans for their plight.

Not so, said the Republicans. They contended they had appropriated some \$50 million more than the governor recommended in the last six years.

Evans retorted the Republicans took credit for past educational funding increase when they were really taking money out of one pocket and putting it in another. He explained the Republicans took money from the general fund to replace shortfalls caused by the 1 percent tax law.

Another controversy is the instance of some Republicans implementing the 1 percent tax law immediately while Evans, and many Republicans, such as the learned Rep. Morgan Munger, R-Ola., say it should be done gradually so as to not violently disrupt the finances of local units of the government. They likely are right.

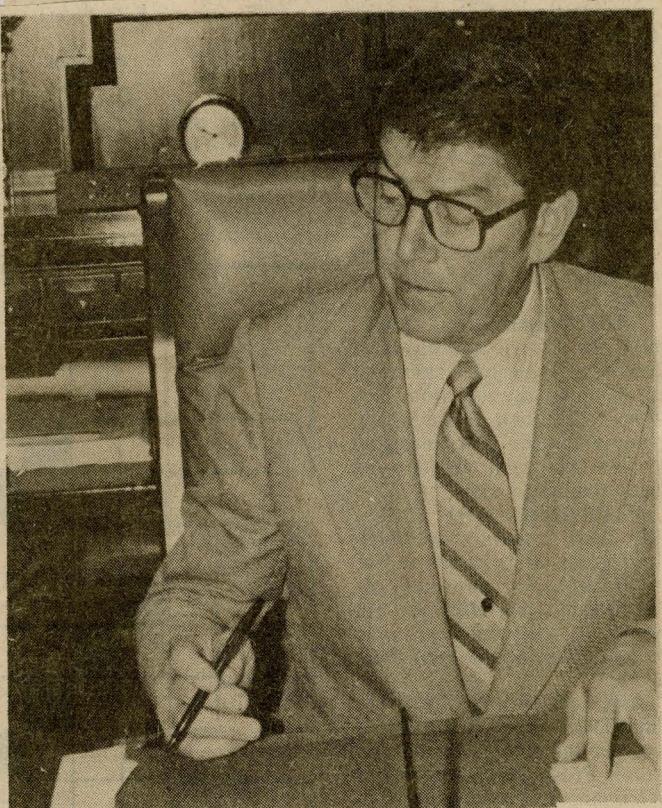
The Legislature is now entering the second half of what is expected to be a session of close to 70 days.

If the Democratic governor and the Republican leadership can differ over issues where there appears general agreement on the surface, it indicates vivid fireworks for later in the session, which is a natural state of affairs, anyway.

The Department of Energy, which the governor likely was justified in asking in view of the energy crunch' is dead for the session, but not for the campaign ahead.

The governor and Republicans must still fight over the bones on the teacher and public employee salaries. They also will become a political issue in the 1980 campaign.

What is happening now seems a dress rehearsal for the campaign leading to the Nov. 4 general election.



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Embattled governor

BOISE — Democratic Idaho Gov. John V. Evans ponders many of the state problems as he sits at his executive desk during the current session of the Idaho Legislature. The governor is at loggerheads with the majority Republican legislative leadership on a number of state issues.