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The political pulse

Legislative limelights

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Evans and Legislature got along fairly well

BY BEN J. PLASTINO
Post-Register political editor

BOISE — Although this is an election year, the relationship between Democratic Gov. John V. Evans and the Republican controlled Idaho Legislature was surprisingly good.

At least much of the sharp interchanges of the past were kept at low ebb and this helped in the functions of both the executive and legislative branches of governor to the benefit of the people of Idaho.

If there were any dramatic fights they were confined to the two Republican senators, Wilson Steen, Glenns Ferry, and Vern Brassey, Boise, who participated in some fisticuffs last week that recalled some of the more tempestuous political days of the past. The two engaged in a hot argument over what appears a rather comparative disagreement on parliamentary procedures. Brassey called Steen a profane name and Steen tossed a couple blows, one to Steen's jaw and one to his mouth.

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There were three areas of disagreement — as expected — right-to work, the so-called Idaho Little Davis-Bacon Act and reapportionment, all of which the governor vetoed.

Legislative reapportionment has little interest with the bulk of Idaho voters but the right-to-work and Idaho Davis-Bacon proposals likely will become major campaign issues.

House Speaker Ralph Olmstead, an announced Republican gubernatorial candidate, kept his vow of serving his legislative leadership free of partisanship to the point that he drew praises from House Minority Leader Melvin Hammond, D-Rexburg. Hammond noted Olmstead's fairness was appreciated by the minority Democrats who have only 14 House members, compared with 56 Republicans.

Lt. Gov. Philip E. Batt, also an announced aspirant for governor, also presided over the

Senate without apparent bias but on frequent occasions did take partisan potshots at the governor.

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The governor generally approved the general fund budget for the first time since he took office in January, 1977, after Gov. Cecil D. Andrus left to become U.S. secretary of interior. This is especially in contrast with a year ago when the governor bitterly lambasted the Legislature in general and the Joint Finance Appropriation Committee in particular in slashing his budget recommendations and seeking to dismantle many of the state departments.

This year, though, the governor said he generally approved of the \$463,623,200 budget which he observed was not far from the \$467.8 million he approved.

The governor was especially pleased with the 5 percent public employee salary raise and restoration of the Clean Air Bureau he recommended.

He was miffed at scrapping the Division of Economic and Community Affairs which has been set up to promote not only tourism but business expansion. However, a compromise has been under discussion. The governor has offered a compromise of \$245,000, rather than the original \$415,000. JFAC did approved \$129,000 but this is to handle administration of more than \$6 million in federal community grants.

Perhaps the tight financing has drawn the governor and Legislature closer together to fight a common problem. Despite the outcries of belt tightening, the \$463,623,200 budget is a 9.9 percent hike from the \$422,042,500 of the current year. This is about as good as could be done, even during the most prosperous of times.