

The 1980 Idaho Legislature ...

# East Idaho legislators see low key session

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(Editor's note: This is the 15th and last in a series of articles giving the views of East Idaho legislators on the main issues shaping up for the coming session. This last article is a consensus of their thinking.

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Views of East Idaho legislators on what appear the salient topics for the 1980 Legislature to open Monday indicate another conservative session, patterned somewhat along the lines of the 1979 edition.

As was the case in the last session, implementing the 1 Percent Tax Initiative will dominate the session, but the interest centers on whether the harried lawmakers can come up with a way to do this or finally give up and extend the budget and tax freeze another year.

As is recalled, the legislature delayed implementation last year until this year, although they did enact measures to correct constitutional flaws and clarify some provisions.

Wrapped up with this proposal is how the local units of government, primarily the cities, can operate under the present restrictions. If the key to this is not found, the lawmakers may extend the freeze.

Sen. Vearl Crystal, R-Rigby, and Rep. Darwin Young, R-Blackfoot, who had key hands in implementing the initiative in the last session, have indicated favor extending the freeze.

Crystal suggested adding a growth and inflation factor and Young proposes another state appropriation to local units of government to help counties reach 1 percent of the market value.

Rep. Wayne E. Tibbitts, R-Lorenzo, suggests raising the sales taxes 1 percent and diverting the approximate \$30 million to the cities and counties but this appears to meet with less than enthusiastic response from most of his colleagues.

Rep. Doyle C. Miner, R-St. Anthony, co-chairman of the Joint Finance Appropriation Committee, said his discussions with many legislators in the state also favor a budget freeze for another year.

Gov. John V. Evans also has urged help to the local units of government and even went so far last year as to threaten calling a special session during the summer.

Although the vast majority of the East Idaho lawmakers favor giving assistance to cities they are badly split on giving authority on the local option

tax. As a result, it would appear nothing will be done.

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State legislators know the state has enough money to operate without great hardship. For example, they all earlier agreed a 10 percent budget increase or slightly more is reasonable. They predicted about a \$400 million budget and the governor's later recommendation for \$406,200,000, or 13.6 percent increases is within the ballpark.

Most want to give public education the best possible increase which they figure will be near 10 percent but all resent the threat of the Idaho Education Association it will close schools unless there is a 13.2 percent hike, mostly for teachers' salaries. Evans has asked for 8.8 percent jump.

Most also want to give the Department of Transportation a sizeable increase but all agree the recommended \$39 million hike asked by the governor and the department is out of the question. It would appear from a consensus that about a \$10 million increase is the most possible — if the revenue is available.

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Request of a 13 percent salary hike and other fringe benefits by state employees is also viewed with little enthusiasm by a majority, although most indicate they are entitled to a sizeable increase in view of a below par raise last year. If the money is there, they could get as much as 10 percent.

Skipping to other issues, almost all oppose creating a full-fledged Department of Energy, but generally agree it should be

upgraded and better funded; oppose certificate of need and state licensing of day care centers; see little change in the Idaho Water Plan, strongly oppose minimum streamflow legislation, and oppose transferring state income collection to the IRS.

The East Idaho legislators, naturally, almost in one voice, oppose any legislation that would ban shipments of radioactive waste shipments into Idaho, and much of this mood is carried over to the business-oriented lawmakers; and give little support to expansive health and welfare programs.

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They also turn thumbs down on any proposal that would take away the Legislature's power to implement initiatives and leave them to a vote of the people, as proposed by the Idaho Property Owners Association, which sponsored the tax initiative.

They do, however, favor changing the present usury limit of 13 percent, even to the point of removing the ceiling altogether.

They also express interest in legislation to encouraging the "Sagebrush Rebellion," that is working for transfer of federal lands to state control, although there is a divergence.

Some of these views could change in light of shifting conditions, but that's the way most feel at present. It also must be remembered that the conservative outlook of the East Idaho legislators has been generally followed in recent sessions, and this may be even more the case this year.