

Mayor seeks city power bills, tax benefits

By BEN J. PLASTINO
PostRegister political editor
Mayor Thomas Campbell said
Wednesday the City of Idaho

Falls is interested in seeking two specific power bills and special provisions in the 1 Percent Tax Initiative that can help cities.

The mayor said this is above the legislative package approved by the Association of Idaho Cities, which he also supports.

The most ambitious proposal is one that calls for a constitutional amendment that would permit cities to sell revenue bonds to build power dams. The mayor said this is contemplated under the city's plans for construction of a power dam south of Idaho Falls. Such a proposal would be subject to a majority vote of the city residents.

The measure would need to pass by a two-thirds margin in each Legislative chamber and then a majority vote of the people in the 1980 general election.

Surplus power

Another bill the city seeks is one which would permit it to sell surplus city power to other public utilities, such as the Bonneville Power Administration, Utah Power and Light Co. or other power groups.

Campbell said if the city acquires a new power plant it might have surplus power to sell at least for a time.

The mayor said he also would like to see the tax initiative freeze continued for another year, with the addition of a growth and inflation factor for cities.

He said the city is anxious that any debt incurred by merging the State Firemen Retirement System with the Public Employee Retirement System be exempt from the 1 percent limitation. Campbell

tax benefits

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explained if this merger is done the city would need to pay \$130,000 a year and he would want this considered outside the tax initiative restrictions.

Regarding local option tax, Campbell said he is looking with some favor at the city collecting fire protection costs on some buildings and facilities that are now tax exempt, such as churches, hospitals and some businesses. He emphasized it would not apply for residences.

"If the Legislature is able to implement the tax initiative reasonably so that cities and counties can get reasonable revenue, that would be fine," he

said. "I don't think it can."

Legislative package

The Association of Idaho Cities has an ambitious overall legislative package program but whether it will get much of what it seeks is open to doubt.

They include giving a substantial slice of state revenues to local government, local option taxation on such items as wine or liquor-by-the-drink; and transient recreational vehicles staying at campgrounds and trailer parks.

Also supported are bills for eliminating the population restrictions on the motel-hotel tax for tourist cities which is now limited to cities in counties under 20,000 population which derive the most economic impact from the tourist industry, such as McCall, Sun Valley and Ketchum.

The cities also back lifting interest rates on tax anticipation notes and warrants, to count the mayor as part of a quorum at City Council sessions; and authorization of transit system general obligation bonds.

Among the minor legislation supported are redefining highways to include city streets; using State Water Pollution Control Fund money for training sewage treatment plant operators; combining state and federal funding for innovative sewage treatment projects; and to allow cities to charge for building permit fees under the 1973 Uniform Building Code.



Mayor Thomas Campbell