

Senate leaders agree more harmony exists

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BY BEN J. PLASTINO

Post-Register political editor

BOISE — Two knowledgeable Boise attorneys, Republican James Risch and Democrat Ron J. Twilegar, who will reflect the voices of their party in the Senate, see a positive Legislature the current session, despite tight financing.

Risch is the Senate majority leader while Twilegar is the Senate minority leader and the two will carry the brunt of debates but so far their exchanges have been most conciliatory. This is in direct contrast with what was expected by most observers who believed the two would engage in incessant fiery rhetoric.

Twilegar, who replaced Sen. Cy C. Chase, St. Maries, as the Democratic leader, said he thought the way the Senate handled the Sen. John Peavey election challenge case was commendable. Supporters of the Republican opponent, Maurice Ellsworth, Hailey, challenged the Peavey 54-vote victory on grounds there were election irregularities but all members of the State Affairs Committee said the evidence was lacking. They recommended unanimously the election challenge be dismissed. The full Senate followed with a unanimous voice vote two days later.

"The Peavey election contest was one of the most sensitive issues facing the Senate," commented Twilegar. "In my estimation it was handled with dignity, respect and honor by all with perhaps one exception."

(The exception he referred to was Sen. John Auld, R-Boise, who persisted in charging irregularities but failed to produce any substantial evidence.)

"I think the treatment given in the press caused the one exception to moderate and he was more subdued in the final hearing than he had been," said Twilegar.

Twilegar, who served as assistant minority leader four years ago but was not in leadership in the last three years, said "I think the feeling among the majority and minority is better this year which means it is better for everybody in the state as a whole."

"We don't have to conduct the Senate business with bitterness, stubbornness and distrust. I think we can conduct the opposite of this."

Both Risch and Twilegar said they believed they were off to a good start in 1981, particularly as contrasted with recent past years.

Twilegar said he would like to see an open debate on certain exemptions now granted in the sales tax. He said there are some 30 to 40 exemptions now in existence.

"I think we should treat every exemption on an equal basis," said Twilegar. "There are no sacred cows. I think we can carve off some untouchable areas."

Twilegar said he is willing to listen on a proposal requiring convention endorsements for gubernatorial and congressional candidate but he is not certain he could support return to the full system. By that, he said, he meant conditions where the party bosses picked the candidates in the so-called smoke-filled rooms.

Twilegar said he was the main proponent in bringing about the presidential primary but that he likes to think he is able to change his mind.

He said the argument the campaign would be shorter if the primary were held in early September rather than May is open to question.

"I believe if the question had come up of whether the campaigns would be shortened I would say no."

Risch echoed Twilegar's observation the Peavey case got the Senate off to an amicable beginning.

"The challenge absorbed our energy," he said. "Everyone was above board and forward and that made the difference."

"It appears there is much more harmony, a different feeling in this session. We are getting along well."

Unlike most other legislators, Risch said this might turn out to be a shorter session than most expect."

"It is easier to spend strictly for our needs, rather than fight over what to do with a surplus," he said.

Risch said the Legislature will seek to trim its budget to \$422 million but he added it is difficult to forecast 18 months in advance what the economy will do. He said the budget forecasts are for the 1982 fiscal year ending June 30, 1982.

Risch said he believes the squabble over the appointments to the Pacific Northwest Commission may become the most emotional issue, even above Right to Work legislation, Sagebrush Rebellion and others.

Gov. John V. Evans appointed Robert Saxwick, his chief administrative assistant, and Chris Carlson, former Secretary of Interior Cecil D. Andrus press secretary and regional administrator, to the two positions. A controversy has developed on whether the governor could make the appointments and whether they are subject to Senate confirmation.

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Section D

House leaders predict few tax law changes

BY BEN J. PLASTINO
Post-Register political editor

BOISE — Two House Republican leaders said Wednesday they didn't feel there will need to be many changes in implementing the 1 Percent Tax Initiative in the current session of the Idaho Legislature.

Majority Leader Walter E. Little, R-New Plymouth, and Assistant Majority Leader Darwin Young, R-Blackfoot, said in a Post-Register interview they feel state and local governments will simply need to tighten their belts and live within their income.

Both predicted there will be no general tax increase and agreed the 2 percent sales tax jump proposed by Rep. Myron Jones, R-Malad, will not get far.

"We have got about the same kind of problems we have had in the past," said Little, "except it's even tighter this year."

"We can cut programs, make across-the-board cuts or freeze salaries and budgets."

Little said a salary freeze would mean a state savings of \$18 million.

"I don't know that a employee increase is necessary," he commented.

Little said the most logical way out of the financial dilemma is to find how how much funding is available and then let the Joint Finance Appropriation Committee trim budgets to come within the projected income.

Little frowned on a severance tax on hard minerals but said it might be a good idea to do this for fossils and oils now because none have been found so far in Idaho. If there is some discovery, then the tax would already be in force and the state could reap the benefits.

Another financial drawback, Little said, is the

loss of \$8 million in federal revenue sharing.

He said the state also faces the obligations of paying \$2.7 million in Medicaid delinquencies, \$1 million to repair the state prison damages and \$100,000 for the Mount St. Helens volcano ash cleanup.

He also said the Legislature need not worry over a possible \$3 million shortfall projected for the current year. If this does happen, then it is the responsibility of the governor to order a further cutback but Little added he is optimistic this may not be necessary.

He said the Legislative Revenue Projection estimate of \$422,250,000 looks accurate. He also said nothing is sacred and that includes a possible moratorium on kindergartens. Young, who was one of the main authors in writing the 1 percent implementation measure in the last two sessions, expressed particular concern over school district funding.

He said the 1 Percent Initiative has saved tax increases but there has been a greater shift to the property owners by speeding up property re-evaluation.

"I'm really satisfied with the way the 1 percent has been implemented and still keep within the law but there will be a need for a little cleanup on some of the provisions," he said.

Young contended most counties can go along with continuing a budget freeze, but granting a little increase in some cases.

Some of the counties that face increases, he said, are Canyon, Ada, Bannock, Nez Perce and Bingham.

East Idaho cities that also face the need for hikes are Firth, Blackfoot and Aberdeen in Bingham County.