

Senate leaders agree more harmony exists

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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.