

## *Legislative limelights*

# Stivers steamroller tactics created deep partisan rift

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The steamroller tactics used by House Speaker Tom W. Stivers, R-Twin Falls, in the special legislative session last week are understandable but they created deep partisan rifts that will carry over to future Legislatures.

It was Stivers' apparent motive to bring the special session to an end as quickly as possible by enacting the same educational funding bills vetoed by Gov. John V. Evans and then go home.

It was his pre-legislative boast that the session would "last four or five hours" and indeed as far as the House was concerned that's what happened. He banged the first gavel at 2:30 p.m. and the House adjourned sine die (indefinitely) at 7:30 p.m.

Stivers is one of those colorful quick-shooting-from-the-hips, outspoken, staccato-speaking individuals. It got results but it left many ruffled feelings, not only among the Democrats but many legislators of his own Republican Party.

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Stivers used tactics that violated legislative protocol in the special session. These may come back to haunt him in future Legislatures among both Republicans and Democrats.

He unilaterally refused Gov. John V. Evans' request to address the joint session and induced Senate President Pro Tem James Risch to go along with this breach of courtesy, the first time such a deplorable event has occurred in the history of the Legislature.

Instead of separately drafting the four education bills on public schools, higher education, vocational education and agricultural

research-extension he had them all crammed in a single omnibus bill.

He then assigned all of the bills for action in the House and Ways Committee which is under strict control of the speaker instead of the germane House Appropriation Committee.

He adjourned the House as quickly as possible without waiting for Senate action, although he complied to a constitutional provision under Article 3 Section 9 which permits adjournment of one chamber with consent of the other providing the one chamber adjourns within three days of the other. However, by doing this, it gave the Senate no chance to make changes, as this would have required the adjourned House to come back to act on these changes.

It is recalled that in 1980 the Senate adjourned without consent of the House and members had to come back at their own expense to finish their business.

Stivers also on his own held in his desk without a vote a bill passed by the committee and sponsored by Rep. Gordon Hollifield, R-Jerome, to repeal the half cent sales tax.

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Both Stivers and Risch said the invitations for the governor to speak came too late and were not clear but facts prove otherwise.

Evans' legislative assistant, Merle Parsley, a former legislator, said he advised the Statehouse secretaries of both leaders Friday afternoon, May 6, of the proposed amended call and his request to address a joint session. Risch was on a Taiwan trade trip and did not return until Sunday night before the May 9 special session.

Stivers, however, gave his true

reasons. He told this writer Monday before the session started he did not see any purpose in a joint session, that Evans would give the same talk he had given over the state. Risch, who acquiesced to Stivers' actions, said in his nine years, a governor has never asked to speak at a special session.

Actually Evans' talk was only 10 minutes long. The House even recessed for an hour to wait for the Legislative Council to print copies of the bills passed by the House for distribution to legislators and others interested so it would have not delayed the proceedings. Two Republican senators, Sen. C. A. "Skip" Smyser, Parma, and William Ringert, Boise, apologized on the Senate floor for the shameful behavior of their leaders. The governor's office reported a number of other Republican legislators have sent letters or called on the governor personally to also express regret. Others have deplored the action in talks and through the news media.

Actually, Evans got more mileage on this snub than if he had addressed the joint session. Other members of the leadership say that neither Stivers or Risch consulted them on their brusque rejection of the governor's request for an address.

In retrospect, the final legislative results likely would have been unchanged with enactment of the vetoed education bills. In fact, the session could have ended a day earlier but the Senate Democrats took affront at the Stivers' and Risch's denial of the governor's appearance and refused to suspend rules in retaliation. It sets a sour note for this and the 1984 Legislature.