Legislative limelights . . .

Evans budget proposes excellent guidelines

Post Jan 10, 1979

By BEN J. PLASTINO
Post-Register political editor

The $361 million general fund budget proposed by Gov. John V. Evans follows predictions and should pretty well set the financial guidelines for state government for fiscal year.

It's about 40 million more than the current fiscal year, provides for a modest 6 percent increased spending level and boosts the state share from 65 to 71 percent for public education. It's a modest 11 percent increase in state income.

From all reports emanating from the statehouse, this is about what was figured the best the state could do under the 1 percent initiative limitations.

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Newly-elected House Speaker Ralph Olmstead, R-Twin Falls, a hardline conservative in his own right, indicates approval of the governor's budgetary recommendations.

As was suspected, the two Senate Republican leaders, Senate President Pro Tem Reed W. Budge, R-Soda Springs, and Majority Leader James E. Risch, R-Boise, indicate obstruction tactics by already nitpicking.

Reed, Risch and the Democratic leadership are scrambling to adopt a posture of placing the 1 percent initiative into effect in 1979.

That's an unrealistic attitude to take and they know it. Already the cities, counties and school districts have adopted budgets for the fiscal year. A cutback in anticipated funds would hurt most in local essential services.

Budge and Olmstead have suggested the cutback be made effective sometime this year, the Democrats propose Oct. 1.

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The cutbacks don't hurt state government much; it primarily affects cities, counties and school districts. The state doesn't collect property taxes for its own operation; that's up to cities, counties, school districts and local government entities, such as local highway districts, cemetery districts, etc.

Actually, Evan's suggestions for a 1 percent tax limitation initiative phased in over a two or three-year period is more realistic. His backing for local option tax also is meritable.

Why anyone would oppose the local option tax is puzzling.

This merely gives the cities the right to propose such a local option tax, but it is subject to a vote of the city people affected by a two-thirds margin. If they don't want it, they don't have to vote for it. It could include sales, a hotel-motel tax, liquor by-the-drink tax or others.

In fact, it's about time cities are given more power from a rural-oriented Idaho Legislature whose record for granting more municipal authority has been less than spectacular.

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As observed previously, in this off-election year, the governor and legislators should be able to reach agreements on a broad spectrum of financial problems without the political overtone. After all, Evans' term runs for four more years, those of the legislators for two years. What good or bad they accomplish this session is likely to be forgotten for the 1980 and 1982 elections.

Unlike previous years and because of leadership, the House may be the one that takes the dominate role, while the Senate from all present indications may stage a three-ring circus which does nobody any good, least of all the state.