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Legislative leadership shared

As the 49th Idaho Legislature prepares to convene on Jan. 12, records show that in the past, eastern Idaho lawmakers have held about their share of leadership positions.

Some of the most outstanding legislators, those who have helped shape the state's political destinies, have come from this part of the state.

For those who take only passing interest, the leadership is made up of the speaker of the House, the Senate president pro tem, and the leader, assistant leader and caucus chairmen of each party in the Senate and House, or 14 posts.

The caucus chairman was added as a leadership position in 1969.

For the upcoming session, no eastern Idaho legislator holds a leadership position in the House, and only one of the 14 committee chairman-

ships is held by someone from the area.

That's Rep. John Sessions, R-Driggs, who continues to head the House Transportation and Defense Committee. He's in his 11th term, second only to Rep. Harold Reid, R-Craigmont, who is serving his 14th term.

In the Senate, eastern Idahoans hold three of the four top Republican posts. They are Sens. Mark Ricks, Rexburg, majority leader; Mike Crapo, Idaho Falls, assistant majority leader; and Jerry Twiggs, Blackfoot, majority caucus chairman.

Sen. Vearl Crystal, R-Lewisville, gave up the assistant majority post he'd held for the last two years to take over as chairman of the Senate Local Government and Taxation Committee. This was the post held by Sen. Dane Watkins, R-Idaho

Falls, before he surrendered it to make an unsuccessful election bid to be Idaho's 2nd District congressman last spring.

Besides Crystal, the only other eastern Idaho senator to hold a committee chairmanship for the coming session is Sen. Ann Rydalch, Idaho Falls, who will head the Commerce and Labor Committee. It is one of 10 chairmanships in the Senate.

Rep. Linden B. Bateman, R-Idaho Falls, also yielded his House majority caucus chairmanship and then resigned his House seat during the reorganization a month ago, apparently because he was disappointed over not getting the House Resources and Conservation Committee chairmanship and for what he said was another in a series of frustrating legislative experiences.

Records dating back to the first

session in 1891, indicate eastern Idaho lawmakers have held the top office of president pro tempore in the Senate more than their share of the time, but have not done so well in the House for the top post of speaker. In fact, this session is the first time in at least 30 years no eastern Idahoan has held a House leadership post. There always has been at least one Senate leader during that time.

Sen. James Ellsworth, R-Leadore, holds the Senate president pro tem record by serving eight consecutive years, 1969-76.

Other eastern Idaho pro tem presidents were A.W. Naegle, R-Idaho Falls, in 1961; O.J. Buxton, D-Driggs, 1957-59; E.J. Soelberg, R-Arco; 1951; J.E. Williams, R-Blackfoot, 1945-47; and John W. Hart, R-Rigby, 1909 and 1913-15. That's 21 of the past 95 years.

For the House speakership, there were only two from eastern Idaho. They were Rep. Allan F. Larsen, R-Blackfoot, 1975-78, for the second longest in Idaho history; and Rep. C.A. Bottolsen, R-Arco, 1931. That's only five of the last 95 years.

The Legislature adopted annual sessions in 1969. However, it met in special sessions on several occasions, particularly the preceding three years.

Two eastern Idaho legislators, Ellsworth and Larsen, held the top spots in their respective chambers simultaneously in 1975-76.

In 1961-62, three Idaho Falls legislators held top positions. They included Naegle as Senate majority leader; Rep. Orval Hansen as House majority leader; and Democrat Rep. Don Pieper, as house minority leader, who had served the previous session as House majority leader.

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