

Legislative limelights . . .

Legislature twinkles handling 1 percenter

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Although the 45th Idaho Legislature appears floundering on many fronts it does shine in the way it has handled the all important 1 percent tax initiative.

The credit for this must go to a veteran and astute legislator, Rep. Steve Antone, R-Rupert, chairman of the House Revenue and Taxation Committee, which was given the task of implementing this initiative, favored by 58 percent of the people in the last general election.

The Republican leadership badly fumbled the ball at the start of the session, when it frantically huddled together and decided it would take the prime hand in the decision.

It didn't take long for the Republican leaders to see the error of their ways. They immediately encountered the opposition of the Democrats, who charged they were deprived of any voice, and also many of the more astute Republicans who also felt they wanted an input.

In football parlance, the Republican leaders fell back and kicked and the ball landed in the laps of the legislators.

There was a wild scramble, and the Senate and House members in all their wisdom went their separate ways. They began consideration of bills, many of which were duplications and contradictory to each other.

It was then it finally dawned on Senate and House leaders they had better get together, and the matter was turned over to Antone's committee, where it should have gone in the first place.

Antone and his Senate counterpart, Sen. Edith Klein, R-Boise, chairwoman of the Senate Local Government and Taxation Committee, named six members from each chamber to coordinate the legislation.

Representing the House are Reps. Morgan Munger, R-Ola, chairman; Darwin Young, R-Blackfoot; Gordon R. Hollifield, R-Jerome; Harold Reid, D-Craigmont; Ron Harlow, D-Lewiston, and Mike Gwartney, R-Boise; while from the Senate are Sens. Klein, Vearl Crystal, R-Rigby; James Leese, D-Pocatello; Lester Clemm, D-Troy; Richard S. High, R-Twin Falls, and Michael Black, D-Craigmont.

The subcommittee made up of Young, High, Reid and Crystal was the one that came up with the key legislation, House Bill 166, which forms the cornerstone of the 1 percenter. It easily passed both chambers and was signed by the governor.

Generally this bill corrects a number of constitutional flaws in the original initiative, places the 1 percent limitation in effect Jan. 1, 1980, and freezes local taxes this year to the 1978 levels to prevent local governments from taking advantage of taxpayers while the law is being implemented.

There are a number of other companion measures, such as HB 218 to define functional use;

another for requiring the State Tax Commission to write rules and regulations for methods of appraising different categories of property; HB 215, providing for protection of owners who

have lived in their residence for at least five years if property is zoned from residential to commercial without their consent; HB 246, a local option tax bill to authorize cities and counties to levy taxes other than property, subject to majority of affected voters; and another bill providing \$29,975,000 in property tax relief in 1979.

Although Gov. John V. Evans is at odds with the Republican leadership, he had paid a glowing compliment to the legislators in the way they have handled implementing the 1 percenter.

The House Revenue and Taxation Committee and the Senate Local Government and Taxation Committee then has done its job.

It's at the other end where stems the current troubles, the Joint Finance Appropriation Committee.

It must be realized this committee has a mountainous task, that both co-chairmen, Sen. David Little, R-Emmett, and Rep. Doyle C. Miner, R-St. Anthony, are new at their job, and they are wading into financial waters they have never tried before. After a slow start they now appear to be moving ahead and doing a creditable job.



Rep. Steve Antone, R-Rupert