

Legislative limelights . . .

# Just who got that tax relief? — you didn't

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What we feared would happen in passing the 1 percent tax initiative is now taking place.

The gullible Idahoans who rightfully resented the groaning property tax burden are finding they will pay even more in override school levies, increased electrical rates and higher fees for all services, such as park recreation, garbage collection, sewer, water and others.

Added to the woes as state agencies tighten up their belts with less money and personnel, the ones who lack the political clout of the utilities and big corporations—the sick, aged, children and poor—will get less services and money.

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The State Tax Commission said the 11 mills tax relief of about \$26 million will give the average property taxpayer a sum ranging from \$10.31 in tiny Clark County to \$63.09 in the heaviest populated Ada County. Most of the others hover midway, such as Bonneville \$36.84, Bingham \$30.28, Jefferson \$43.39, Fremont \$25.25 and Madison \$61.66—big deal.

These same tax figures by the State Tax Commission show residential property owners get 42.8 percent tax relief, rural property 22.4 percent; business and industry 16.7 percent; and utilities 17.9 percent. In other words, big business and utilities get more than a third.

But business, industry and utilities don't pay taxes—people do. Theoretically, these savings should be passed on to the consumer, meaning you and me. But we haven't seen any reduction in electrical, telephone or water rates, nor any decrease in prices at the grocery store, or any other type of store in years. In fact, all predictions call for steady increases due to inflation which still is clicking along at 10 percent a year or more.

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We see many school districts slapping on override levies, or the children face below quality education. The bigger school districts of Idaho Falls 91, Bonneville 93, Snake River 52, and Madison 321 already have set special levy elections and more are on the way. These levies will wipe out most of the so-called tax relief they expected.

The other \$17 million in "tax relief" comes from freezing the local units of governments—cities, counties and schools—for 1979 and 1980 budgets to the 1978 levies. These are figures that look good in print but actually will have little direct impact, except to further strap local government.

The ironical part of this is those cities, counties and school districts which made an honest effort to cut their 1978 budgets to the lowest point suffer the most. Those which went on a spending binge in 1978 get the best break.

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Gov. John V. Evans took a responsible action in vetoing the additional 2 percent tax relief as he rightfully feared it could bring deficits to state government.

We see such highly partisan legislators as Sen. Reed Budge, the president pro tem; Majority Leader Walter E. Little, and Sen. Dane Watkins and other Republicans bitterly criticizing him for this action as it appears the popular thing to do.

But you won't hear dissent from such responsible organizations as the Associated Taxpayers of Idaho, Association of County Commissioners

and Clerks; Association of Idaho Cities; yes, and even the Idaho Association of Commerce and Industry made up primarily of big business or from corporations or utilities—they know the score. And last of all, don't blame the Idaho Legislature. It did extremely well in seeking to implement the 1 percent tax limitation that won a 58.2 percent majority. The fault lies with those who voted for the initiative who mistakenly thought they would get a property tax break, even though warned repeatedly what would and is happening.