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Governor Veto Certain On $6 Million Funding

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BOISE, Feb. 19 — Idaho legislators, particularly members of the Senate-House Joint Finance Appropriations Committee, should have no doubt that Gov. Don W. Samuelson intends to veto the recommended supplemental appropriation bills amounting to $5,976,868.

When the governor was in Idaho Falls last Friday night to address the biennial Eastern Idaho Lincoln Day Assn. banquet, he made this clear in a press conference preceding the banquet.

This writer asked the question and in his recollection it was the first time that the governor has been emphatic in a matter of this kind.

After discussion on the proposed supplemental appropriations, this writer asked him pointedly whether he would veto a recommended appropriation of $6 million by the appropriations committee and he said to all the newsmen present: "I certainly will."

It couldn't be any plainer than that.

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In fact the governor indicated that he would veto any appropriation that would spill much over $5 million.

He said he had recommended a $4.2 million supplemental appropriation in his State of the State and budget message. He moved later from this position to approve an increase of some $670 thousand, including some $300 thousand to settle the forest fire bills with the federal government. This would bring his total to $4,870,000.

He declared in the interview and to the some 300 attending the banquet later that to go over $5 million would only take money away from the 1971-72 period.

He pointed out a 1 per cent drop in the economy would bring a $2 million loss, and perhaps as much as $2.5 million. He emphasized he couldn't take the chance, even though the surplus is figured at $6.9 million. He stressed the fact the picture could change drastically after July 1.

The governor pointed out he is authorized to make 4 per cent cutbacks, such as Gov. Robert E. Smylie was forced to do several years ago but that this should be avoided as it means the local taxpayers might need to make up the deficit on the local level.

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The $300 thousand for the forest fire bill is without doubt the wisest investment this state can make. The federal government had demanded $5 million, as one familiar with the 1966-67 fires of North Idaho, knows.

A special committee made up of Lt.-Gov. Jack Murphy, State Sen. Ray W. Rigby, D-Rexburg, Senate assistant minority leader, and State Rep. William Lanting, R-Hollister, House speaker, conferred with federal officials and knocked the bill down to about $550 thousand.

The legislature allocated $250 thousand in the 1969 session, and the $300,000 in this supplemental appropriation is expected to liquidate the obligation. This isn't bad, settling for one tenth of the original demand.

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If the governor vetoes the appropriation bill, there is little doubt but that it will be sustained. There are enough conservatives in either the House or Senate to do this. In the 4 per cent tax increase repealer, the Senate sustained the governor's veto by a large margin. In this case, the bill would return to the House, where the bill originated.

The governor has five days for veto if he should get the bill during the session; 10 days if after the legislature adjourns.

He might veto separate appropriation items to reduce the amount to near $5 million but there is little question he will not accept the total appropriations in their present form, not by a long shot.