

Legislative limelights . . .

Evans, GOP exhibit compromise leadership

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BOISE — Democratic Gov. John V. Evans and the Republican-controlled Idaho Legislature in the past, crucial week demonstrated strong leadership qualities after an erratic and indecisive start.

Most political observers, including this one, thought this Legislature would go down as one of the worst in its 89-year-old history, but when the blue chips were down it did respond to what it had to do.

That is not to say it reached greatness — this remains to be seen on the impact of the 1 percent tax initiative implementation in the fall of 1980 — but it did do the best job possible in light of an initiative mandate that can bring needed tax relief but fail at true tax reform.

Evans demonstrated strong leadership qualities which many believed were lacking. He fought vigorously for the state agencies and its 14,000 employees, almost standing alone. At the same time, he also battled for what he thought was adequate tax relief and state funding for the financially strapped local units of government — cities, counties and school districts.

His threat of calling a special session unless city local option measures are enacted is premature. The full impact of finances will not be known until the cities, counties and school districts grapple with the financial problem after the 1 percent initiative goes into effect Jan. 1, 1980. In the meantime, their 1980 budgets must hold near the level of 1978 and 1979.

In other words, the second half of the 45th session in 1980 will have plenty of time to better wrestle with the 1 percent impact.

The entire leadership, on both sides of the aisle, and both chambers and the chairmen of the Joint Finance Appropriation Committee also met at least the minimal demands.

In the Senate, President Pro Tem Reed Budge, R-Soda Springs, said he purposely played a low profile role to give him a freer hand to work with the governor and minority leadership on policies and compromises.

House Majority Leader
James Risch, R-Boise, after what appeared unnecessary acrimonious debate with the Democrats, changed his tactics and showed a spirit of compromise that moved the session rapidly the past week. The other Republican leaders, Sens. J. Wilson Steen, Glenns Ferry, assistant majority leader, and Walter Yarbrough, caucus chairman, Grand View, followed along this line.

The veteran Democratic Senate minority leaders, Cy Chase, St. Maries, minority leader; Kermit V. Kiebert, Hope, assistant leader, and Israel Merrill, Blackfoot, caucus chairman, turned in their usual excellent job as members of the loyal opposition.

Over in the House, the one outstanding light was House Speaker Ralph Olmstead, R-

Twin Falls, who abandoned his past rigid conservative role and became a leader in every sense of the word. There was hardly a Republican or Democrat who didn't have praise for his fair-mindedness and understanding, a sharp difference from many past year.

Similarly the other House Republican leaders, the affable Sen. Walter Little, New Plymouth, majority leader; Jack Kennevick, Boise, assistant majority leader; and Bud Lewis, R-St. Maries, caucus chairman, lent effective supportive roles.

The House Democratic leadership, despite its small numbers — GOP hold a 50-20 margin — made the most use by joining the moderate

Republicans in enacting considerable beneficial legislation.

Heading this contingent were Minority Leader Patricia McDermott, Pocatello; Assistant Leader Ronald Harlow, Lewiston, and Caucus Chairman Marion Davidson, Bonners Ferry.

Perhaps the most plaudits go to the JFAC headed by Sen. David Little, R-Emmett, and Rep. Doyle C. Miner, R-St. Anthony, who in the past two weeks, took the leading hand in hammering out compromise appropriations.

The Democratic governor and Republican leadership didn't get all they wanted but they're reasonably satisfied. Perhaps that's the most glowing measure of success.

See picture reverse side



Post-Register photo

GOP Legislature leadership

BOISE — The Idaho Legislature Republican leadership of both chambers got together for a brief discussion here the past week. Clockwise around the table are Reps. Bud Lewis, St. Maries, caucus chairman; Jack Kennevick, Boise, assistant majority leader; and Walter E. Little, New Plymouth, majority leader; Sen. J. Wilson Steen, Glenns Ferry, Senate

assistant minority leader, and the two top leaders; House Speaker Ralph Olmstead, Twin Falls, and Senate President Pro Tem Reed Budge. The Republican controlled Legislature is generally rated to have done an overall good job in implementing the 1 percent tax initiative, but it failed to enact a number of other laws considered essential by many.