

Moderate Republicans take prominent roles

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One of the astonishing developments in the current Idaho Legislature is the increasing prominent roles of the emerging moderate Republicans in the House.

In this year of 1 percent initiative it was believed the staunch conservatives would have little trouble in enacting legislation. Such has not been the case, as the crestfallen House leadership has found on a number of occasions.

As mentioned previously, the new House speaker, Rep. Ralph Olmstead, has attempted to follow an even balance role that has not sought to stifle the moderate voice.

Such is not the case of House Majority Leader Walter E. Little, R-Plymouth, who has on frequent occasions shown a strong partisan drift that has alienated his more moderate colleagues. Many believe that Little retains bitterness over two close losses for the speakership, this current session to Olmstead and two years ago to House Speaker Allan F. Larsen, R-Blackfoot.

From East Idaho, Rep. Elaine Kearnes, R-Idaho Falls, has assumed an influential stance after following a more conservative course in previous years.

A number of others have joined her, such as Rep. Morgan Munger, R-Ola, who had a key hand in drafting the generally accepted 1 percent initiative implementation, three Boiseans, Reps. Mike Gwartney, Kitty Gurnsey and Peggy Bunting, the personable Lawrence Knigge, Filer, Tom Boyd, Moscow, and at times, John H. Brooks, Gooding, and Mack Neibaur, Paul.

In the all the dominant Joint Finance Appropriation Committee, Knigge, Boyd, Mrs. Gurnsey and Neibaur, have been swing votes that have prevailed.

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On the extreme conservative side, which now on crucial occasions has lost, are such Republican representatives as Wendy Ungrikt, Boise, Linden B. Bateman, Idaho Falls; Ray Infanger, Salmon; Gary Ingram, Coeur d'Alene; John F. Reardon, Boise; Rusty Barlow, Pocatello, and the leader, Lyman Gene Winchester, Kuna.

In former years, the conservative faction joined with the tightly-knit Democrats to wield a political club. This year, it's the opposite, with the moderates merging with the Democrats, which really is a more equal philosophical match.

It was the Republican moderates who, in effect, brought about failure to reject the legislative pay increase; and they turned down the 7 percent state employee salary increase for public employees that carried no funding. A compromise then was enacted for furnishing \$3 million, although Democratic Gov. John V. Evans said this is only a third enough.

Most of the other Republicans follow a generally conservative line, but not extremely so. In this category are Reps. John O. Sessions and Kurt L. Johnson, Idaho Falls; Darwin Young, Blackfoot; and Wayne Tibbitts, Lorenzo.

Most issues are not of particularly strong partisan hue, but where they are the coalition of moderate Republicans and Democrats generally hold an edge of something like 38-32. This means some dozen Republican moderates join the 20 Democrats.

In the Joint Finance Appropriation Committee, Gurnsey, Boyd and Knigge frequently join the Democrats which makes the vote even at 10-10, not enough to carry. However, Neibaur is often the swing vote. Generally the Republican majority has been

successful in slashing state agency budgets, except in the cases of Republican Attorney General David H. Leroy and Secretary of State Pete Cenarussa.

From this distant East Idaho bayou it appears Evans has hammered out an austere reasonable budget of \$336 million and further cuts mean reduction in what many consider essential services. He now wants the Republicans to spell out the programs to be obliterated.

The Republicans want to slash the budget to \$322 million, which is about a \$3 million increase over this year's budget.

Crux of the controversy is the assertion by the governor that he doesn't want the state agencies and state employees to bear the brunt of the \$16 million

cutback. The Republicans, Rep. Doyle C. Miner, R-St. Anthony, chairman of the House Appropriation Committee, as one of the leaders and Little, think otherwise. They want to increase public education funding from the governor's recommend \$24 million to \$35.3 million.

The House Republican leadership has jammed through House concurrent resolution to this effect, and resolutions are not subject to the governor's veto or approval.

However, the governor has the veto power over appropriation and that's where the action will come late in the session. He also is assured Senate Democrat support in upholding the veto. Both sides are heading for a collision course which would indicate each will need to yield for a compromise.