

Legislative limelights . . .

Legislators may skip tax limit solution

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Key legislators are not publicizing it, but they are adopting a hardline view for making very few further changes in implementing the 1 Percent Tax Initiative.

This sentiment was gleaned when the powerful Legislature Joint Finance Appropriation Committee met in Idaho Falls recently, and also in talking with many other legislators.

It's their attitude the majority of the people of Idaho voted for a 1 Percent Initiative and they should now be willing to suffer the consequences.

When first proposed in the summer of 1978, it appeared that 80 percent or more of the people favored the tax initiative. Then as the newspapers and the more knowledgeable legislators and community leaders warned of the pitfalls, the majority gradually dwindled but time ran out. The upshot was the passage of the 1 percent proposal by a 58 percent majority, certainly not overwhelming, but still decisive.

The Legislature, especially the special committee headed by Rep. Morgan Munther, R-Okla, and which included Rep. Darwin Young, R-Blackfoot, as a member, did an astonishing job in implementing the initiative in the 1979 session, considering the meager information it had at that time.

Despite the pressure for placing the cutbacks into effect in 1979, the lawmakers wisely delayed implementing the tax restrictions until 1980, and also placed a two-year freeze on budgets.

This budget freeze has caused city, county, school and other local government officials to howl in protest. Those local units of governments who sincerely limited their budgets in 1979 to little or no increase, ironically, are hit the hardest. Those who were more liberal, fared best.

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Perhaps many in state and local government will charge the legislators are responsible in taking a stand which says, in effect, "boil in your own oil," but in many ways the lawmakers can't be blamed.

In observing first hand the 1979 Legislature, there were only a handful of those on the radical right who warmly supported the initiative, mostly because they did not understand the harm it was doing to government.

It might be added none of these were from the 10 East Idaho counties, although a couple or three are on the borderline.

The Legislature gets the first crack at appropriating money for state government. Technically speaking, that's its primary obligation. After that, the local units of government get what is left.

The Legislature is constitutionally required to set up a machinery for schools, counties and cities to manage their own affairs, but doesn't have to appropriate them one cent.

Of course, the lawmakers aren't about to take that stand because most of them are concerned about local government. Although they refused to heed the recommendations of

Democratic Gov. John V. Evans to give cities local option tax authority in the last session,

they will find the situation hasn't gone away, but in fact is even more frightening.