

Legislative limelights . . .

Democrat senator sinks state building program

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By BEN J. PLASTINO
Post-Register political editor

A neophyte Democratic senator sank one of the state's most worthy building programs and also brought keen disappointment to Democratic Gov. John V. Evans.

Sen. Ken Robinson, D-Boise, who narrowly ousted Republican veteran Lyle Cobbs in the 1978 general elections, deserted a solid bloc of Democrats and cast the affirmative vote that passed the bill withdrawing approval for new state office buildings in Pocatello, Twin Falls, Boise and Coeur d'Alene.

It must have been a keen disappointment for the governor, who favored this approach as one that would save the state millions of dollars in the long run and bring greater efficiency by placing state agencies under one roof.

New state office buildings are already rising in Idaho Falls and Lewiston, plus a 10-story tower in Boise. All three structures are scheduled for completion this year. The Idaho Falls and Lewiston structures cost about \$3 million each, while the huge Boise edifice has a price tag of about \$8 million. Under an amortized program, these buildings would be same yearly cost as the rent, but they, in effect, become property of the state through the Legislature-created Idaho Building Authority.

It was late Friday that the vote took place, and two or more progressive Republican senators, Richard High, Twin Falls, and Larry Craig, Midvale had cast votes against the bill that would stop the building authority from further construction.

At that point, it appeared a victory for more new state buildings, but Robinson to the surprise and dismay of his Democratic colleagues, voted in favor. If Robinson had stayed with the Democrats, the bill would have been defeated, 18-17.

The Robinson vote then influenced Craig to change his vote from nay to aye, and the bill passed 19-16. High kept his vote a nay, along with the 15 Democrats.

Only last Thursday morning, Craig had told the Greater Idaho Falls Chamber of Commerce that he would favor new state buildings and he kept his word.

In a State Affairs Committee meeting earlier in the week, Sen. J. Marsden Williams, R-Idaho Falls, also opposed the chamber's views and voted to send the repealer bill out of committee. His vote was the one that passed it to the floor 6-5 on a straight party line vote.

Robinson, asked the reasons for his vote, replied a survey in his district showed patrons wanted cutbacks and building construction was one of the items. He did admit that governor had expressed his disappointment at the crushing Robinson vote.

Vincent Mullin, the senior and hard-working member of the Idaho General Authority Board, was crestfallen at the turn of events. He now sees nothing but a bleak future for the board.

pride. It meant the state could have seven regional buildings where most state agencies would be under one roof.

These are assured for Boise, Idaho Falls and Lewiston. It is now far in the distance for Pocatello, Twin Falls, Coeur d'Alene and Nampa-Caldwell.

Delaying construction for even one year means millions of dollars lost in future inflation costs of building material and labor and increase in interest rate.

Mullin pointed out the Senate action now will influence future building interest rates in state building projects to rise.

Ingram's delaying action last year to attempt to stop the Idaho Falls, Lewiston and Boise buildings for example cost the state \$500,000 in increased interest, reported building board members.

With the makeup of the present Legislature, chances for authorization of further state buildings appear virtually nil. It means that commercial building owners will continue to gouge the state for millions of dollars in yearly lease rentals.

The smoke screen argument that it would cost the state more money does not square with the facts. This has been used by the four Republican leading opponents to state building program, and whose records show they are the darlings of big business. They are Sens. J. Wilson Steen, Glenns Ferry, and Dean Van Engelen, Burley, and Reps. Larry Harris, Boise and Gary Ingram, Coeur d'Alene.

As Mullin said at the chamber discussion, the building authority will not construct state buildings at cities which don't want them.

J. Kent Just, chamber executive secretary, found that in checking the Pocatello, Twin Falls and Coeur d'Alene chambers that they were less than enthusiastic over new state buildings in their cities.

Just had offered the help of the Idaho Falls but dropped the efforts when chamber officials from those cities didn't seem intensely interested.

However, the state building venture is something much more important than local