Miner predicts economy minded Legislature

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The political pulse

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ST. ANTHONY — Chairman of the important House Appropriation Committee Wednesday predicted another tight, conservative Idaho Legislature for 1980.

Rep. Doyle C. Miner, R-St. Anthony, gave virtually no chance to a proposed sales or income tax increase, or even to giving cities authority for local option tax.

He did see a possibility for increasing the gasoline tax to help improve and maintain Idaho's highways.

Miner estimated a 9 percent increase in the general fund budget of $331 million, which would place it at about $360 million. But he added the state will lose ground, as this won't even offset the anticipated inflation of 12 percent or more.

"The sales tax of an additional 1 percent won't happen next year," said Miner. "To think it will is only kidding ourselves.

"I think the governor mentioned a sales tax increase because he was speaking to the cities and counties, and I might have done so myself.

"This (1 percent sales tax increase) is not going through the Legislature until we see the full impact of the 1 percent initiative. That is not possible in 1980, but we would have seen the full impact by the year after. It will then be a new ballgame, and we may have to regroup."

Same legislators

Miner pointed out the same legislators who served in the first half of the 45th regular session in 1979 will return for the second half in 1980.

He observed that following the 1980 elections, there could be turnovers that could change complexion of the Legislature, adding, "It could even affect me."

Miner said he also feels the same way about a state income tax increase — that it won't happen, at least not in the coming session.

He pointed out the two legislative leaders, House Speaker Ralph Olmstead and Senate President Pro Tem Reed Budge, are extremely fiscally conservative and view any tax increase with less than hearty enthusiasm.

Miner said he has been sympathetic to the plight of cities, noting he has served seven years on the St. Anthony City Council. But he is pessimistic the Legislature will give the cities local tax option powers.

"It will be a lot closer on the vote, but I have a gut feeling it is not going to happen," he said.

"I'm not a hedger, but I'll have to wait and see," he said.

Regarding any gas tax increase, Miner said "I probably will vote yes for some method of increasing the highway user fund. If it is not for a gas tax increase, it might be to increase vehicle registration fees."

He said he believes such proposals will have a chance of passing, in view of the declining gas tax revenue due to the gasoline shortage. He pointed out there is a need to improve and maintain state highways.

Miner observed the 1 cent gas tax increase a couple of years ago raised some $6.5 million in state revenue and brought $40 million more in federal highway matching funds yearly, which have greatly boosted the highway improvement program.

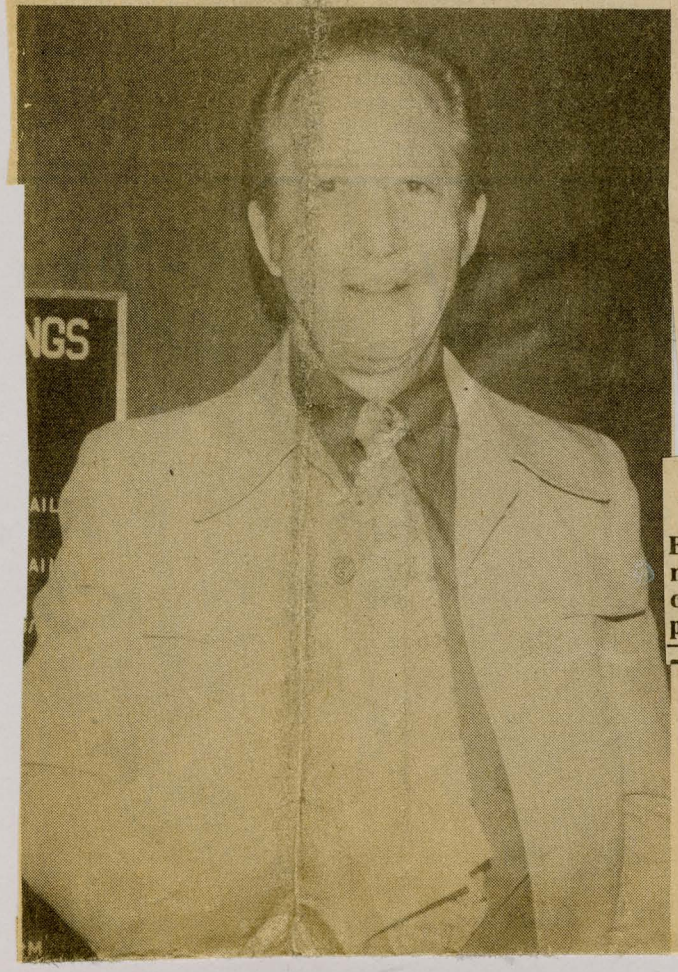
Minor observed the state will finish this year with a $10 million surplus, but this likely will go to the state agencies, primarily the Department of Health and Welfare.

For universities

He said higher education should also get an appropriation increase, as it was held to amounts this year that didn't nearly offset inflation costs.

Because of the 1980 elections, it is probable the Legislature will adopt a "hold the line budget," that will barely keep state government operating, he said.

He also announced the Joint Finance Appropriation Committee will meet in early December in Idaho Falls to get a firsthand view of the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory and its radioactive waste management and nuclear research programs. The committee will also review Department of Health and Welfare programs, including the Child Development Center, Development Workshop, Headstart and other programs; Eastern Idaho Vocational Technical School; the Youth Service Center at St. Anthony, State Hospital South at Blackfoot, the Idaho Falls State office building under construction now, and perhaps other state operations in this area, as time allows.



Holds pursestrings

Post-Register photo

BOISE — State Rep. Doyle C. Miner, R-St. Anthony, chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, predicts a very conservative Idaho Legislature, and no tax increase, except possibly for gasoline tax, in the 1980 session.