The 1980 Idaho Legislature . . .

Most favor extending budget freeze a year

(Editor's Note: This is the first in a series of 16 articles giving the views of East Idaho legislators on the salient issues shaping up for the coming session). Sun Dec 16 1979

By BEN J. PLASTINO
Post-Register political editor

Most East Idaho legislators favor implementing the 1 Percent Initiative next year and extending the budget freeze a year.

Sen. Vearl C. Cyrstal, R-Rigby, a former longtime Jefferson County assessor, who served on a special committee working on this legislation in the last session and had a key hand in drafting the initiative implementation, said he favored extending the freeze one more year with a growth and inflation factor added.

He said he checked a typical residence in one of the cities in his district to compare what the impact would be after reappriasal. He found the 1979 taxes on this typical home were $352 on the 1979 market value of $25,000. For 1980, the market value increased to $53,000 and under the 1 percent, the 1980 tax could be $530 or 178 percent increase.

"We could continue the freeze and allow a 20 percent increase for growth and inflation and the taxes on this same home would only increase $70, not $178," he said.

"Agricultural property in this same county is nearly unchanged because net profits have not increased over the past five years. Therefore residential property, because of revaluation, would receive the increase. This is not justifiable."

Sen. Israel Merrill, D-Blackfoot said "if we decide not to implement it fully, we probably need no tax increase. Immediate implementation could be catastrophic for cities and counties, as well as schools."

All legislators opposed any tax increase and Rep. Wayne E. Tibbitts said if there is any it should be either sales or the income tax in the upper bracket.

Rep. C. Wendell Miller, D-Idaho Falls, said the only tax he would favor is voter approval of the local option tax. He pointed out these local option taxes were part of the 1 Percent Initiative, adding "both the Legislature and the citizens seem to forget that fact."

He called for implementation the coming year but if the obstacles are too great they should freeze the budget another year.

Rep. Linden B. Batemen, R-Idaho Falls, said there are too many contsitutional questions involved in the initiative which must be resolved before full implementation is possible.

"After implementation, property tax increases should not be allowed except when inflationary adjustments are necessary," Bateman said.

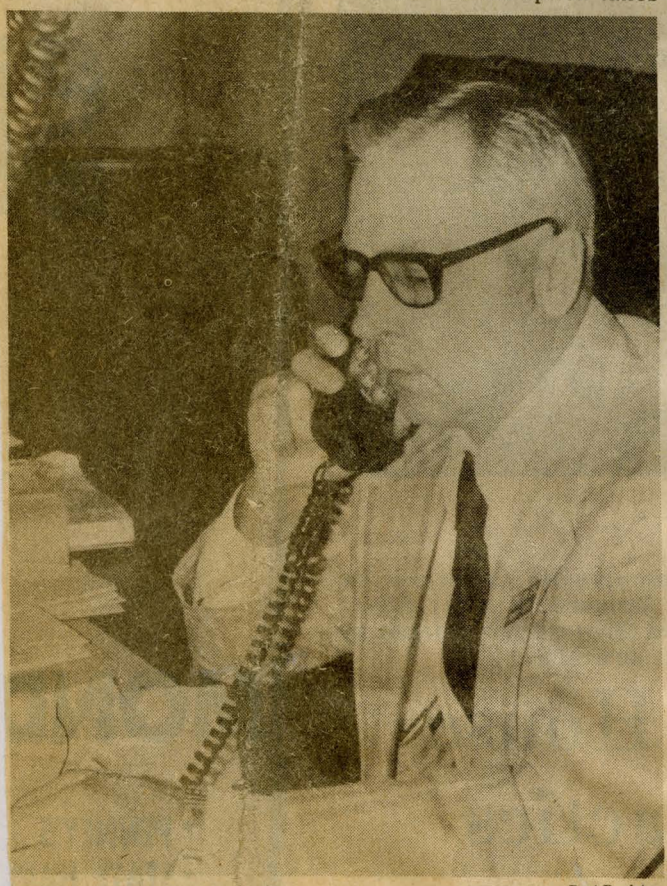
Rep. Darwin Young, R-Blackfoot, who also served on a special joint committee to implement the initiative, said he favored a freeze on property tax revenue for another year with another state appropriation to local units of govenment to help counties reach 1 percent of the market value."

Sen. Dane Watkins, R-Idaho Falls, observed "that with election year in 1980 and a mandate to reduce taxes in 1978, legislators are not going home next March and say, "look folks what we have done, your taxes are going up.' "

Rep. Gary Paxman, R-Idaho Falls, cryptically said "we should start with the governor's office and cut the size of government."

It may be most feasible to extend the implementation date of the 1 percential initiative an additional year, said Rep. John Sessions, R-Driggs. He said he will make final decision after he has had an opportunty to fully study the recommendations of the interim committee.

Rep. Doyle C. Miner-St. Anthony, co-chairman of the powerful Joint Finance Appropriation Committee, said his discussions with many legislators in the state favor a budget freeze for another year. He pointed out school budgets actually are not frozen anyway because the state gave public schools general fund money.



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Tax expert

STATE SEN. Vearl C. Crystal, R-Rigby, former longtime Jefferson County assessor, and who worked on a joint special committee to implement the 1 Percent Tax Initiative in the 1979 Legislature, reflects the views of majority of legislators favoring extending the budget freeze for another year.