

The Post-Register The political pulse

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Legislative limelights . . .

Legislative remapping needs slight changes

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There has been question in the minds of a majority of legislators, including many Democrats, whether Gov. John V. Evans should have vetoed the legislative reapportionment bill.

Most legislators contacted, and this includes Democrats, agree that in the revision there only will be slight changes. No matter what plan is drafted there are always a few who are dissatisfied, and this includes the vetoed proposal.

Most legislators privately feel the gubernatorial veto was unjustified because the controversy centered on only one or two legislative districts of the 35 in the state.

However, Senate Minority Leader Ron Twi-
legar, D-Boise; and Sens. Chick Bilyeu, D-Po-
catello, and Bert Marley, D-McCammon, had the
governor's ear and were able to persuade the
governor to brandish his big red veto stamp.

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The most distressing factor about the veto is the consensus it will only add a bitter partisan note to the 1982 Idaho Legislature which already faces awesome problems, mostly financial.

Most generally agree the legislative reapportionment will stay as approved by the summer special session except for possibly some minor changes in District 33, made up of south Bannock, Oneida and Power counties; and in the Boise area to give urban voters a greater voice. Some Boise legislators complain instead of giving the city an extra district outright, parts of the urban areas were placed in three outlying rural sectors.

The objections of Sen. Bert Marley, D-McCammon to include Power county in his district carry little weight. There is no reason he hasn't as good chance as his Republican adversary. Bilyeu did well in Power County when it was in his district and he is more of a city-oriented legislator than is Marley. The Evans and Democratic charges of gerrymandering in this district is hardly justified.

There is hardly a county in the state that is a sure thing for a candidate of one political faith, although it is admitted the Republicans have the decided advantage. However Democrat Gov. Cecil D. Andrus proved this in 1974 when he won every county except Lemhi; and popular Democrats, such as Auditor Joe Williams and Treasurer Majorie Ruth Moon do almost as well. Evans in 1978 won 34 of 44 counties and was close in a half dozen others, including Bonneville.

Conversely, popular Republicans also capture Democratic counties, although there are only a half a dozen or so of the 44 now in this category.

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The Republicans hold a top heavy advantage of 23-12 in the Senate — only one short of veto proof for two-thirds majority, and 56-14 in the House, the widest Republican margin in history of the Legislature.

This lopsided margin is misleading because election records show that over the years the Democrats poll about 40 percent statewide, compared with some 60 percent Republican. In legislative contests, the Republicans appear to win most of the close ones. This was particularly true in 1980 when a Reagan tide helped a number to cop tight races.

It's also has been observed that although the eight largest urban counties have 62 percent of the population, the Legislature is firmly in control of the rural factions.

This situation is important because the rural and largely Republican Legislators have stifled the cities' voice on a number of important bills.

The big question on the apportionment — and this has been true for the history of the state — remains this: the cities, the population centers of the state are again denied the representation their numbers deserve.

Hopefully, the legislative district reapportionment issue can be settled early so the Legislature can go on to more important things. As most know, legislative reapportionment is of little interest to the bulk of Idaho constituents.