

Idaho special session aims for tax cut, ed spending

BY KEITH RIDLER

Associated Press
BOISE — Idaho Gov. Brad Little on Tuesday, Aug. 23 called a special session of the Legislature starting next week aimed at using part of the state's projected \$2 billion budget surplus for a record \$500 million income tax rebate this year to help residents cope with increased food and gas prices due to inflation.

The Republican governor also proposed a tax cut of more than \$150 million annually by creating a corporate and individual flat tax rate of 5.8% starting next year. The corporate tax rate is currently 6%, the same rate for the state's highest income bracket. Under the bill, the first \$2,500 of income for individuals and \$5,000 for people filing jointly would be exempt from taxes.

Little wants to bolster K-12 public schools and post-secondary education with \$410 million annually from sales taxes starting next year. Of the \$410 million, \$330 million is proposed for K-12 and \$80 million for post-secondary education.

The proposed bill already has enough co-sponsors in the 70-member House and 35-member Senate to make it to the governor's desk for Little's signature. Significantly, among those co-sponsors are enough members in a House committee and Senate committee to make sure the bill moves to the floor of the respective chambers for a full vote by all members.

Little said the tax cuts will help Idaho residents deal with high prices, and that the education investments will help the state's efforts to boost workforce development training during times of economic uncertainty.

"Folks, this is conservative governing in action," Little told reporters at an event to announce the tax breaks that was held in a parking lot next to a gas station where motorists pumped gas. "Use the record surplus brought on by prudent management to pro-



Gov. Brad Little delivers the annual State of the State address to the Idaho Legislature and the citizens of Idaho on Jan. 10, 2022, at the Statehouse in Boise.

Darin Oswald/Idaho Statesman, File

vide immediate and ongoing record tax relief and make historic investments in education while cutting taxes."

Language in Little's proclamation calling the special session cites high inflation, currently about 8.5%.

"Idaho taxpayers and the education system are especially imperiled by the consequences of historic inflation," Little's proclamation stated.

Democratic Sen. Janie Ward-Engelking, a retired teacher and education advocate who took part in the news conference, is one of the bill's dozens of co-sponsors.

"I have to look at what really works for children in this state, and we know that being 51st in the nation in per-pupil expenditures for kids is not good," she said. "So this investment in education is huge to me."

The Legislature, when it meets in regular session in January, will decide how to spend the education money, and it's possible a new group of lawmakers following the November election could attempt to cut education spending by the \$410 million in other areas.

"I'm trusting the governor," Ward-Engelking said. "He

said he will veto a bill that doesn't increase education funding by this amount of money."

Idaho is experiencing rapid population growth, but Ward-Engelking said many young people are leaving the state and that many of them college students. She said increased education spending could limit the departures.

Republican House Speaker Scott Bedke, who is running for lieutenant governor, told reporters Idaho residents could expect tax rebates relatively soon, possibly by the end of September.

"What this (bill) does is it signals that we support education going forward, and we recognize that inflation is hard not only on citizens but also on our businesses and our schools, and this gets direct help," he said.

The special session is set to start on Sept. 1, ahead of the November election when all of Idaho's 105 state legislative seats are up for election as well as the governor and other statewide elected officials.

Also on the ballot in November is an initiative called the Quality Education Initiative that backers have

said would boost education funding by raising taxes on corporations and individuals making \$250,000 or more annually. Backers say Idaho schools are badly underfunded and that the initiative would raise more than \$300 million.

If passed by voters, it would take effect Jan. 1. However, if lawmakers in the special session approve the proposed bill and Little signs it, it would take effect Jan. 3, negating and replacing the initiative.

Little said there was no connection between the ballot initiative and the proposed changes in taxes and education funding. But he said he preferred the proposed bill to the ballot initiative because it would lower taxes instead of raising them.

Property taxes and grocery taxes, two prominent Idaho issues over the last several years, are not addressed in the bill. Little said the complexities involved with those taxes make them difficult for a special session aimed at returning money quickly to residents.

Republican Senate President Pro-Tem Chuck Winder, who supports the proposed bill, said there is still bud-

get-surplus money remaining in the state's coffers and that he expected property taxes and grocery taxes to be considered in the regular session in January.

"We're still going to have over a billion dollars to deal with property tax," he said. "I'm pretty sure the grocery tax issue will come back up. We're going to have money to do different things and maintain our rainy-day funds."

Little restricted the special session to the one topic only as he is allowed to do under the Idaho Constitution. But lawmakers could try to use the session to raise other concerns.

Little in February signed into law what was then the biggest tax cut in the state's history — a combined \$600 million that included a one-time \$350 million in tax rebates and \$250 million in permanent income tax reductions going forward for people and businesses. That's on top of tax cuts in 2021, which combined with the tax cuts enacted earlier this year reached nearly \$1 billion.

If the new tax rebates and cuts are approved, tax relief under Little would climb to more than \$1.5 billion.

Deputies may have stopped mass shooting at Gorge

GEORGE, Wash. (AP) — The Grant County Sheriff's Office in Washington state believes its deputies stopped a man from carrying out a mass shooting at the Gorge Amphitheater Friday night, Aug. 19.

The sheriff's office said people at the event and security personnel told them at around 9 p.m. of a man in the parking lot near his vehicle, KOIN-TV reported.

Witnesses saw the man inhale an unknown substance from a balloon and then load two 9mm pistols from the trunk of his car, according to the sheriff's office.

Witnesses also told investigators the man put one gun in the waistband of his pants and the other in a holster that was outside his waistband.

Witnesses say he then approached concertgoers and asked what time the concert ended and where they would be leaving the venue.

The sheriff's office said the man, identified as Jonathan Moody of Ephrata, Washington, was stopped by security outside the gates and disarmed. The sheriff's office said no one was injured.

After investigating, deputies arrested Moody on suspicion of one count of possession of a dangerous weapon and one count of unlawful carrying or handling of a weapon. Moody was lodged in the Grant County Jail. It wasn't immediately known if he has a lawyer to comment on his behalf.

The event happened at the Gorge Amphitheater's concert series Bass Canyon, and electronic dance music festival. The outdoor venue holds about 25,000 people.

The Gorge Amphitheater does not allow weapons on site.

Moody did not make any statements to deputies, the agency said.

Baker County CHURCH DIRECTORY

Elkhorn Baptist Church

Sunday School 10 AM
Morning Worship 11 AM
Evening Worship 6 PM
Discovery Kids Worship 6:30 PM
3520 Birch St, Baker City
541-523-4332

Harvest Church

WORSHIP GATHERING 10:00 AM

Harvest Cafe Open 9:00 AM - 9:50 AM
3720 Birch St, Baker City
541-523-4233
www.BakerCityHarvest.org

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

Saturday Worship 11:00 AM

www.bakercitydsda.com
17th & Pochontas, Baker City
541-523-4913

SAINT ALPHONSUS HOSPITAL CHAPEL

Open to all patients, family and friends for reflection and prayer.

St. Alphonsus Hospital in Baker City

AGAPE CHRISTIAN CENTER

Sunday Services 10:00 AM & 6:30 PM

South Highway 7, Baker City
541-523-6586

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH

Service at 10 am
Live Streaming on Facebook

1734 Third Street, Baker City
541-523-3922
firstlutheranbakercity@gmail.com

Baker & Haines United Methodist Churches

Baker UMC, 1919 2nd St, at 11am
Haines UMC, 814 Robert St, at 9am

To join us on Zoom email bakerumc@thegeo.net and the link will be emailed to you or follow us on Facebook

Pastor Michele Holloway

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE CHURCH

Sunday Service 10:00 AM

www.ChristianScience.com

3rd & Washington, Baker City
541-523-5911

St. Francis De Sales Cathedral

Daily Masses: M, T, Th, F 9 AM
Day Chapel in Cathedral
Wed Daily Mass 9 AM at St. Alphonsus Chapel
Sat 8 AM at Day Chapel

Baker City Saturday Mass 6 pm
Baker City Sunday Mass 9:30 am
St. Therese in Halfway 2 pm Sat
St. Anthony's in North Powder 11:30 Sun
541-523-4521
Corner of First & Church, Baker City

St. Stephen's Episcopal

Services at 9 AM
1st & 3rd Sundays, Holy Eucharist
2nd & 4th Sundays, Morning Prayer
5th Sunday, Morning Prayer

2177 First Street • Baker City
Entrance on 1st Street
Corner Church & First Streets
541-523-4812

ST. BRIGID'S IN THE PINES COMMUNITY CHURCH

11:30 a.m. Services
1st & 3rd Sunday Holy Eucharist

East Auburn Street, Sumpter
541-523-4812
A Mission of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Baker City

BAKER CITY CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Sunday Worship
First Service 8:30 AM
2nd Service & Sunday School 10:00 AM

Jr. High & High School Youth
Tues 6:30 PM
Youth Pastor Silas Moe
675 Hwy 7, Baker City • 541-523-5425

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Sunday Worship Service 10:30 AM

1995 4th Street, Baker City
541-523-5201
firstpresbaker.blogspot.com

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

9 - 11 AM - Baker City 1st Ward
10:30 AM - 12:30 PM - Baker City 2nd Ward
Noon - 2 PM - Baker Valley Ward
EVERYONE WELCOME

Family History Center
Everything Free
Tues & Fri 1-4 PM
Wed & Thurs 10AM - 1PM
Wed Evenings 5-8 PM
2625 Hughes Lane, Baker City
541-523-2397

Baker City Church of the Nazarene

Sunday Worship 9:45am
Sunday School 8:30am

Coffee is 9:15 AM - 9:45 AM

Pastor Troy Teeter
1250 Hughes Lane, Baker City
(Corner of Cedar & Hughes)
541-523-3533
www.bakernaz.com

Calvary Baptist Church

Third & Broadway
541-523-3891

Sundays
9 AM Sunday School
10 AM Worship Service
Mondays
6:30 - 8 PM
Baker Teens Underground
Wednesdays
5:30-6:30 PM Dinner & Prayer Time
Thursdays
6 - 7 PM Free Community Recovery
6 - 7 PM Celebrate Discovery
bakercalvarybaptist.com

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