

OUR VIEW: Idahoans will benefit from new election law

Our view

By Murf Raquet, for the editorial board

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It may not seem like it now, but newly passed legislation to consolidate Idaho elections is a good thing.

When the law takes effect in 2011, myriad taxing entities will only have four dates on which to have an election.

In the past, elections, especially school bonds and levies, could be scheduled for just about any time during the year.

In addition to the primary election on the third Tuesday in May and the general election on the first Tuesday in November, the new law allows for school district elections to take place on the second Tuesday in March and the last Tuesday in August.

Elections are costly. Running more than one election at a time will save taxpayer money.

There is no reason a bond election can't be run at the same time as the primary and cemetery and highway districts' taxing matters.

A common approach to bond and levy elections was that if they fail to pass then school officials would try again a few weeks later. The theory was with a little tweaking, the issue would pass on the second or third try.

It wasn't unusual to find school elections scheduled a week or two after a major election. Often the school election was overlooked by voters.

Now school officials will have to do a little more homework and legwork when they take a bond or levy issue to the voters. They'll need to be fairly certain it will pass the first time or they will have to wait for a few months to try it again.

All elections now will be handled by county clerks rather than the taxing entities. The clerks and their employees do a good job running regular elections, and it makes sense from a continuity standpoint for them to run all elections.

"It's going to be a big change and a lot of work, but new bills sometimes offer new change and new opportunities and I think this is going to be good for the voters," said Latah County Clerk Susan Petersen.

This is a big change for many taxing districts. They will face some challenges, but the end result will be a more streamlined and voter-friendly election system, and that's got our vote.