

Tax on plastic bags a popular idea on Web site seeking suggestions to improve efficiency

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BOISE - A new tax on plastic shopping bags is the top-rated idea on Idaho's efficiency Web site.

The proposal is one of about 470 suggestions people have submitted since the site went live in November.

The Web site was initially created to gather input about how to make government more efficient. Now, a new "feedback forum" component allows people to vote on the ideas.

As of Wednesday, a proposal to add a 7-cent tax on plastic shopping bags received 98 votes, almost four times as many as the next-closest proposal. School district consolidation got 25 votes, and requiring legislators to pay higher premiums for health care insurance - the same as other part-time employees - received 20 votes.

Budget director Wayne Hammon said reports detailing the 470 ideas will be sent to the relevant legislative committees this week. It will be up to lawmakers to decide if they want to pursue the proposals.

Ideas that don't require legislative action are being addressed as time permits, he said. Links on the Web site indicate which ideas have been accepted and which have been implemented.

The site has had almost 272,000 visitors since November. Ideas can be submitted in several categories, including revenue, general government, economic development, education, health and human services, natural resources and public safety. The Web address is www.encyency.idaho.gov.