

Few Changes Are Made In State Government

By Robert E. Miller

Montana's state government will be relatively unchanged if the proposed new constitution is adopted by the voters on June 6. In the present list of state officials only the state treasurer is dropped but it is possible that the legislature later could create such an office. Candidates for state offices must

have attained the age of 25, even though a citizen is a voter at the age of 18.

One principal change is that the governor and lieutenant governor must run as a team in both the primary and general elections. Some interpret this to mean that no one can file for either office unless he has selected his partner in advance.

The lieutenant governor is also added to the list of state officers who must reside at the seat of government in Helena.

The executive article contains a provision limiting the number of state departments, bureaus and agencies to not more than 20, which is in harmony with a referendum approved by the people a few years ago and now in the process of implementation.

However, elsewhere in the constitution are a number of other boards and bureaus which may not be included within the basic 20. These 20 departments are to be under control of the governor, each shall be supervised by a single executive appointed by the governor and confirmed by the senate. It is also provided that the governor shall appoint all officers created by the constitution unless there is another provision listed for filling the office.

The governor's veto power is somewhat restricted compared to the present constitution. He may not use the pocket veto. If he fails to sign a bill within 25 days after the legislature has adjourned it will become law. Now it dies. If he disapproves of a bill while the assembly is in session he may return it and ask for changes, but he may not return it twice. Two-thirds of the legislature is required to override a veto.

The lieutenant governor shall succeed to the office of governor if the governor-elect shall fail to assume the office. He shall also serve if requested by the governor, or, if the governor is absent from the state for 45 days, the lieutenant governor automatically becomes acting governor. Whenever the lieutenant governor and the attorney general shall certify that the governor is unable to discharge his duties, the legislature shall assemble to determine what to do.

The governor may require information from officers of the state government on any subject relating to their duties, may require the same from state institutions and may investigate any office or state institution.

Fastest (Tax) Draw In West—Says MTA

Montana citizens pay the highest taxes of any in the 11 western states, according to a survey just made by the Montana Taxpayers Association.

The survey was based on property taxes for home and automobile, personal income taxes and sales taxes paid by individuals and was based on the rate in the capital city of each state.

Tax figures were based on 1972 income of \$10,000 and ownership of a 1969 Ford Galaxie in one category, and an income of \$15,000 and ownership of a 1971 Ford Galaxie in the second category.

In one case the residence was valued at \$20,000 and in the higher category it was valued at \$30,000. Helena's taxes on each of the three items was the highest in both the income classes and in both of the property ownership classifications.

In the first category the total taxes paid by the Montanan amounted to \$1,065 taking account of the fact that he paid no sales tax. In the second category the higher-paid Montanan's taxes totaled \$1,964.

A taxpayer in Oregon ranked second in both pay brackets, again with no sales tax to count. The \$10,000 man paid \$940 and the

\$10,000 man paid \$1,566. While the residential property tax was almost as high in Oregon, the income tax was considerably less and the automobile fee was only \$10. In Montana the tax on the 1969 car was \$69 and on the 1971 car it was \$118.

The three states with the lowest per capita taxes on both categories were Washington, Wyoming and Nevada, none of which has a personal income tax and all of which have general sales taxes.

Helena taxes on a \$20,000 home amounted to \$654, compared to \$650 in Salem, Oregon; \$450 in Salt Lake City, Utah, and only \$306 in Olympia, Washington. On a \$30,000 home the Helena tax is \$981, while in Olympia, Washington, it is only \$459.

The chart shows that Montana is at the top in the per cent of gross income paid out in taxes,

the \$10,000 man paying 10.9 per cent and the \$15,000 man paying 13.1 per cent. Montana's effective tax rate on residential property is also at the top of the list, Helena showing 3.3 per cent, and Olympia, Washington, being lowest with 1.4 per cent.

The survey points out that results apply throughout Montana varying only as the mill levy rate might be different for homes and automobiles from school district to school district.

Somewhat in relation to above is a comparison of living costs recently received which takes the city cost of living index for the nation as 100. In comparison to this, Billings cost of living is 100.4, Great Falls 104.3 and Helena 110.8; New York City is 116.6, Chicago 110.0. Apparently Cheyenne, Wyoming, is a low priced spot, with

an index of 93.1. For food, Great Falls cost was 95.2 of city average, Billings 98.8 and Helena 105.5. All three were well above average in housing, while for utilities Billings was 79.0 and Great Falls 81.7, Helena 102.6.

Ocella, Ga., Star: "We often hear

complaints about the way things are being done at City Hall. 'Griping' is one of the privileges of being a citizen of the community, but before you lambast the city or agree with someone else's complaint, ask yourself what you have done recently to improve your community."

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