

'Atypical' politician's achievements often unnoticed

■ **ATIYEH**, from Page B1.

the campaign.

Even so, legislators say, there was closer consultation.

"He would bring us in and go over it, and we would have an opportunity to comment from the political and fiscal standpoints," Kitzhaber said.

"It was one of the high points of his governorship, having the political courage to reverse 20 years of opposition to a sales tax," Kitzhaber said.

But the ensuing campaign suffered from Atiyeh's late start, he said. In addition, the too-close involvement of Atiyeh's political campaign supporters created a "very poorly organized and run campaign" that was "in some ways an insult to the electorate." For example, the campaign featured a comic-book explanation of the sales tax plan, mailed to voting households.

The sales tax was resoundingly defeated.

"It would have been nice to have him on board from the beginning," said Ivan "Ike" Congleton, who last fall completed nearly 30 years as president of Associated Oregon Industries, "but it didn't make that much difference in the end."

Early this year, Atiyeh said his support for the sales tax was one reason why a poll taken after the measure's defeat showed that 40 percent of the public rated him negatively, compared with 46 percent who viewed him positively.

Not an 'arm-twister'

"I'm not what's called an arm-twister, which in . . . media . . . terms is considered a leader," Atiyeh said.

Atiyeh's style is to "hire good people and let them basically do what they felt was appropriate in the exercise of their own judgment," said Long, the Eugene attorney, who was appointed by Atiyeh to the Land Conservation and Development Commission.

"I've been on LCDC two years, and he's never asked me to do something, or not to do something, or expressed a view," he said. "He just appointed me to the commission and said, 'Go do the right thing.'"

"There's a balance point; there are instances where more control would have been better than less."

As an example, Long cited the 1982 dispute among state agency heads over the proposed transfer of \$81 million from SAIF, the semipublic workers compensation agency, to the state general fund. The transfer was eventually approved in special session to help cover revenue shortages.

A more activist governor might have quelled such debate within his own Cabinet before going public with the idea, Long said.

"I saw Vic do the opposite of that in the early days," Long said. Representing the city of Eugene, Long was about to square off in court against the state over the issue of field burning control.

"The governor himself intervened and got the agency to change its behavior and get out of court."

"But in typical Governor Atiyeh style, he wasn't involved in the negotiation."

By all accounts, intervening at all was atypical for Atiyeh.

Because of the governor's style, "the Legislature probably has exercised more control over more aspects of state government in his term than in Tom McCall's time," Long said.

In 1983, legislators even tried to cut the governor's own office budget.

"They wanted to starve him," Long said.

Atiyeh fought back at the time, but seems to hold no rancor.

"I'm not vindictive," Atiyeh said. "That's a giveaway in politics — You know, 'If you do this, I'm going to remember it.' You know, intimidate legislators."

Atiyeh is generally credited with superior knowledge of the details of state government.

"McCall and (Mark O.) Hatfield were more aloof from the process," said Richard A. Munn, director of the Department of Revenue, "while Atiyeh was much more involved in personally sitting down with agency heads and talking about issues in their budget."

Heard, the former Senate president whom Atiyeh named head of the Department of Commerce in 1983, said, "He has given me my head so I could manage the agency knowing what his priorities were."

Record cited

When he ran for governor in 1978, Atiyeh emphasized his record as an environmentalist. As a state senator, he served on the committee that wrote the state's clean air and clean water laws.

During the race, the timber industry withdrew its support for incumbent Bob Straub, endorsing Atiyeh in the hope he would keep roadless lands then under federal study from being designated as wilderness.

The RARE II study, as it was called, suggested new wilderness designation for about 750,000 acres of Oregon. Shortly after taking office, Atiyeh proposed just 60,000 acres of new wilderness. Congress eventually protected 1 million acres.

"He deserves high marks," said Congleton of Associated Oregon Industries. "He has been very supportive of the timber industry over the years."

That support continues into the current fight over old growth timber, symbolized by discussion of habitat preservation for the spotted owl. Atiyeh opposes any further reduction in the amount of land available to the forest industry, and he suggested a reduction in wilderness equivalent to any set-aside for owl habitat.

Atiyeh's contribution to the consensus on the 1980 Northwest Power Planning Act was not only a major legislative achievement in itself, but it also had conservation implications, according to John Platt, president of the Oregon Wildlife Federation.

"There wasn't going to be regionalization of federal electric power costs without a fish and wildlife program to mitigate fishery losses to hydro plants," said Platt, who was director of the Oregon Environmental Council in 1979. He recalled Atiyeh telling Roy Hemmingway, then the deputy public utility commissioner, to "go out and get a bill."

"And he did," Platt said. "The governor was a reluctant bride, but it was a recognition of political expediency in the need to get a bill."

Atiyeh spearheaded the drive to acquire the lower banks of the Deschutes River for public ownership, and his 1981 endorsement of a federal role in the Columbia Gorge reversed a previous position, lending support to the eventual federal legislation.