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# Who can fill Jim McClure's shoes?

**BLACKFOOT** — Politics is a funny thing. One minute a guy is some politician's mortal enemy, a stiff-necked blockhead, and the next minute that politician is commending the guy for some move that has nothing to do with politics.

I doubt anybody would question that Sen. James McClure is well respected in government circles. Anybody that can continue a successful political career like his deserves a lot of respect.

Yet, neither would I doubt that McClure has been on the receiving end of some verbal abuse more than once. But, if you want to be in politics, verbal abuse is only part of the job — especially these days.

However, as he has announced his retirement, everybody seems to have nice words for him. Even the democrats, the ecologists and the anti-nuclear activists!

But the ecologists and anti-nuclear activists are not really politicians. Some of them may be lobbyists, but they're not politicians. That's why they can make comments like McClure is a great guy, but now that he's out we might be able to get our way!

Politicians have to be more careful. As popular as McClure has been, if a democrat wants to make any headway in the republican public ranks, he can't step on their toes. Therefore, the positive comments from Rep. Richard Stallings, Gov. Cecil Andrus and former Gov. John Evans wish McClure well.



**Brian Lee**

They have to do that. They want some of the McClure supporters to come over onto their side, and if they look like they're patting the back of their good old buddy, Jim, some of his supporters may be impressed.

Also, it's an opportunity for publicity. All politicians want as much publicity as they can get. It's a boost in the political lifeblood. The more people hear or see their name, the more they are likely to remember it, and the more work the public will think they are doing in government.

But, in all fairness, it isn't really a hate-filled war between democrats and republicans.

In fact, one of McClure's strengths was his willingness to work with either party. The wilderness bill he co-wrote with democratic Gov. Cecil Andrus is a prime example. It has been a topic of much controversy, but nobody can declare it a Republican bill.

And McClure's late decision can not be called partisan, as it will hurt

his own party as much as any other party. McClure was aware of this, but as he explained, it wasn't an easy decision to make.

Perhaps this is another example of the senator's devotion to his country and his people. He does not want to give up his job. It appeared he may have made a list of pros and cons and found the list a little longer on one side.

He explained the long delay was due to the difficulty in making the decision.

Politician's across the country take note of this. It is not often such devotion is visible. Indeed, the many investigations of ethics violations within the federal government would seem to point to a lack of devotion.

The way Congress got it's pay raise after public outcry shot it down once would seem to point to a devotion to the dollar, rather than to a constituency.

But it's hard to vote for a devoted representative. It takes many years for such a quality to really come out, after they've built a voting record that can be read, and developed some publicity that reveals it.

Now, the public is going to be bargained with candidates seeking McClure's seat. Judging from the number of people who have "expressed interest" as they awaited McClure's decision, there is sure to be even more now.

How can Idahoans choose someone who will really be devoted to serving us and our interests, out of a

large number of candidates? It won't be easy. It may be impossible.

There may not be another McClure, but that doesn't mean there isn't someone just as good, maybe even better. We must watch the campaigns carefully.

It will probably take our best guess and then six years of watching our choice. A lot can happen in six years, and the amount of seniority McClure built has been invaluable to Idaho interests. It would be a shame to pick the wrong man and have to start all over again six years later.

It will take a devoted, high-quality politician to effectively follow after McClure in his seat. If for no other reason, just because of the experience McClure gained in over a quarter century in government.

I suggest we pray.

**Brian Lee is the assistant editor and a staff writer with The Morning News.**