

Plastino says Symms win part of national trend

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Idahoans elected Steve Symms to replace Sen. Frank Church as part of a nationwide conservative trend in which voters showed they wanted to follow conservative policies on all fronts, says Ben Plastino, Post-Register political editor.

"In the final analysis, it was a question of the people wanting a conservative senator to replace what they felt was one who was too liberal for their own taste," said Plastino, who is recovering from an appendectomy.

Even though Symms credits Reagan with helping him defeat the incumbent senator, Plastino says the strong nationwide conservative trend played the decisive role Republican victories throughout Idaho.

Idaho will continue to have a strong voice in the Senate because Republicans gained control of that legislative body.

If Republicans had not gained control of the Senate, the state would have suffered, he says.

Sen. James A. McClure will presumably become chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, assuring Idaho National Engineering Laboratory of strong backing.

The cumulative effect of Church's stands on the Equal Rights Amendment, abortion, defense and foreign relations issues took its toll, particularly among rural conservative voters, he says.

"Many people felt that although Church had performed well for

Idaho, he had lost touch with many of their conservative views," he said.

Early election tabulations that showed Symms ahead in Bonneville County indicated to Plastino that the incumbent would lose. Church had carried Bonneville County in every previous election.

Reagan's landslide victories in Idaho and Utah were among the more overwhelming vote margins in the nation, he says.

"The results undoubtedly will leave the Idaho Democratic Party in shambles for the next year or two," Plastino said. "It will be a question now of the Republicans showing what they can do."

Vote tallies show people want no more foolish spending, he says.

Plastino says he wasn't surprised by the outcome of any political race, but he was surprised by Republican's wide victory margins in many state legislative races.

"There's no question there was a solid conservative trend that permeated this county as well as the rest of the state and nation," he said. Many Democrats lost because of their party label, rather than for their ability. As examples, he cited the defeat of incumbent Democratic legislators Sen. Richard Egbert, Tetonia, and C. Wendell Miller, Idaho Falls.

Egbert, the senior member of the Idaho Senate, was defeated by William Floyd, an Idaho Falls businessman.

"It was specifically a case of a Republican landslide," Plastino said.

Bonneville County voters approved the issue of permitting wine sales in grocery stores by a 55 percent margin in favor.

Plastino says the winning margin may have been wider if LDS Church president Spencer Kimball hadn't spoken out against the measure.

Incumbent Sheriff Blaine Skinner narrowly lost a bid for re-election, probably in part because of his opposition to the wine measure, Plastino says.

Skinner blamed his narrow defeat Tuesday night partly on Plastino.

"I don't think it was a party issue," Plastino says of Skinner's defeat. "It was wrapped up with the wine issue and widespread criticism of the way he conducted his office . . ." especially regarding Skinner's lack of cooperation with law enforcement and other public officials.

Republicans strengthened control of both houses of the Idaho Legislature.

Legislators and state government officials should be able to work together next year without so much political pressure because it is an off-election year, he says.

"It looks like people definitely don't want any kind of tax increase except under the most critical circumstances."

Rep. George Hansen's victory over challenger Diane Bilyeu came as no surprise. "She had no money and she was running against a strong Republican tide that killed whatever chance she might have had."

Voters showed they were simply disillusioned by Carter's lack of strong leadership. "He simply pussyfooted around too much."

Plastino says if tradition continues, Reagan will have a honeymoon period with Congress.

"For the time being, Reagan should be given a free hand to try to install some of his programs and change the direction of the country."