

Symms to take calculated risk

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U.S. Rep. Steve Symms, R-Idaho, considered virtually unbeatable for re-election, is assaying the calculated risk in trying to oust Idaho's senior senator, Democrat Frank Church, in 1980.

Symms is viewed as part of the right wing faction which appears more interested in opposing big government and unbridled governmental spending, but actually has sponsored little legislation in his own right.

Now 41, he is considered at the height of his career in the House.

He first ran in 1972 as a virtual unknown and his aggressive tactics and appealing personality caused him in the eyes of veteran political observers to spring an upset to defeat Wayne L. Kidwell, who also had served in the Senate as majority leader and went on to become Idaho Attorney General.

Symms has been easily re-elected three times since, which gives credence to the belief he is well-entrenched.

Keep incumbents

Idahoans, however, has shown a reluctance to turn out incumbents except in extreme cases, but it is possible, as Congressmen Ralph Harding, Democrat; Hamer Budge and Orval Hansen, Republicans, and Republican Govs. Don Samuelson and Robert E. Smylie found out, much of their chagrin.

Hansen, when he was congressman, took the plunge in 1966 and was soundly thrashed, with Church getting one of his largest margins with 60 percent of the votes.

Symms feels that since that time, Idaho has been drifting further to the right and away from liberalism to give him an excellent shot for the post.

Idaho Republicans, of course, are worried. Not only do they see Symms as the underdog against Church, but they also feel they risk a 50-50 chance of a Democrat picking up the First District seat with Symms gone.

On the other hand, they also stand to win both and give the Idaho congressional delegation an all Republican makeup.

Symms hotly rejects charges that he is not effective, that he is more interested in fighting legislation than supporting it, along with his colleague Republican George V. Hansen.

Symms emphasizes that he is proud to say he voted and fought against programs in which he feels Congress is continually spending more tax



U.S. Rep. Steve Symms

money, looking for what he says "are more ways to infringe on your individual freedoms."

Lists bill fights

In a news release, Symms said: "There are a lot of issues we win, bills we stop in the House, and points that are made and understood."

"Some of our 'successes', he said, "have been:"

Federal land use planning — Symms led the floor fight in the House and stopped an attempt to instigate federal land-use planning. Symms also led the fight against federal land-use planning in the House Interior Committee.

Instant voter registration — Symms and Congressman Bob Dornan, R-Calif., led a two-man campaign to stop instant at-the-poll voter registration. The program would have led to dangerous abuses at the polls and the bill was withdrawn from consideration after Symms and Dornan proved how easily false identification could be obtained, allowing individuals to vote more than once.

Gun-control attempts — Symms led the fight to prevent the Consumer Product Safety Administration from gaining control over the production and use of firearm ammunition. The CPSA proposed regulations that were a back-door attempt to control guns by controlling ammunition. Symms helped stop these regulations.

Consumer protection — Symms joined other House members to defeat a so-called Consumer Protection Agency that would have added a new layer to the bureaucracy and would have been a bureaucratic nightmare for business and

consumers. Business would have faced even more regulations and consumers would have paid even more for goods.

Timber Management Act — Symms was one of the key authors of the 1976 Timber Management Act, which clarified timber sale laws and developed a variety of reforestation programs.

Ownership of Gold — Symms authored legislation and worked in the House to allow private ownership of gold, a measure which passed in 1974. Now Symms has introduced a bill that will provide for the minting of gold medallions to allow Americans to buy gold in half-ounce and one-ounce increments.

Common situs picketing — Symms was instrumental in the successful fight against common situs picketing in the House. Common situs picketing would have allowed one striking group of workers to close down an entire construction site. Other union workers, even though they were not involved in the strike, would have been allowed to refuse to cross picket lines. The costs in increased construction time would have been tremendous.

Lieu land payments — Symms was the co-author of a bill requiring the federal government to make payments in lieu of taxes for public lands within individual states. That means the federal government makes a partial reimbursement of the tax base lost because of federal land holdings.

Symms said in regards to protecting the environment that the proposal to lockup the state to wilderness is not the answer.

"We must improve technology so we can solve air pollution problems, so we can have industry without polluting our water, and so we can have lumber without destroying our forests," he said. "I also believe that we must balance environmental and economic considerations when making decisions, whether we are talking about use of public or private lands. Knowing that we have pristine mountains in the distance is not very comforting to a person who can't support his family because he has just lost his job in a lumber mill." Regarding senior citizens, Symms said, "Our number one priority should be to balance the federal budget and stop deficit spending. Until that happens, our elderly citizens will have to spend more and more to live less and less well."

"A second major priority

must be to reform and reorganize the Social Security System. "I would repeal the earnings limitation for Social Security recipients. Earlier, I fought to prevent the government from disbanding the Railroad Retirement System. And, most recently, I voted for the Comprehensive Older Americans Act Amendments, a bill that had many more good points than flaws."

Recent positions

Some of Symms' more recent positions include:

Joined with Senator McClure and Congressman Hanson to fight

a. The \$4 billion give-away of the U.S. built canal in Panama.

b. The U.S. abandonment of our ally, the Republic of China on Taiwan.

c. Enactment of legislation to allow common-site picketing which would have allowed a single group of workers to shut down an entire construction project.

d. The establishment of a new federal buracracy, the Agency for Consumer Advocacy, and

e. Additional funding for the ever-growing multi-billion dollar food stamp program which now has one out of every four of our people eligible for stamps.

In his role as a key minority member of both the House Agriculture and Interior Committees, Symms has worked for repeal of the 1903, 160-acre limitation law, a viable suga program and repayment of the American Falls Dam costs.

Symms is an outspoken advocate of a "cap" on total wilderness acreage in Idaho of approximately 3.5 million acres, saying that "Idaho should not have to give more than its fair share of wilderness. We should agree on cap now."

Symms criticizes the "so-called" Gospel Hump Compromise for its short-sighted approach. Less than 18 months after the Gospel Hump Compromise there was pressure on the local lumber mills because of wood shortages which were to be adequate under the agreement.

Symms is working for free market solutions to energy production crisis and favors providing incentives to individuals and businesses such as on-farm gasohol production, and rejects government mandated proposals such as required 10 percent gasohol.

"Until the government and vote buying politicians balance the budget and cut federal spending, there will be no such