

The election eye . . .

Democratic convention may offer challenges

BY BEN J. PLASTINO

Post-Register political editor

The 17-member Idaho delegation to the National Democratic Convention at New York City next week can view with interest the movements seeking an open convention but they really have no place to go.

The convention picked eight delegates for Carter, five for Senator Kennedy and four are uncommitted. The Carter and Kennedy delegates appear solid for their respective candidates. They are not likely to switch votes, at least on the first roll call.

That leaves the four uncommitted delegates who are free to vote as they choose. They probably will cast ballots for an open convention if this proposal should advance to the convention floor.

A story appearing elsewhere on this page from one of them, Joan Cartan, the 19-year-old delegate from Idaho Falls, indicates her leaning for an open convention on grounds she is representing the 20 percent of the uncommitted Idaho delegates who did not particularly care for either Carter or Kennedy. This appears a logical conclusion.

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U.S. Sen. Frank Church, who purposely declined a seat on the Idaho convention delegation because of his re-election campaign, advanced the strongest points in questioning an open convention. He contended such a step would come into conflict with previous agreements that the convention delegates are to be picked at statewide caucuses.

The Idaho Democrats already have come under sharp criticism for picking their delegates through caucuses rather than the presidential primary election. For them to further ignore caucus selections would add more fuel to the controversy.

Carter has well over the number needed for nomination of the nearly 2,000 delegates. A defection of a few likely won't hurt him. Even in an open convention he likely could win the nomination, despite the frantic efforts of Kennedy. Idaho's meager 17 votes wouldn't appear to have much of an impact.

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The Idaho presidential primary results which the Democrats ignored gave Carter 31,983 votes, or 62 percent; Kennedy only 11,148, or 22 percent; and undecided 5,824, or 12 percent.

The convention selection is hardly in line with the voters' choice. The Kennedy forces claim all four of the uncommitted delegates, but this is debatable. Miss Cartan, for example, said she is sincerely uncommitted and declined to assure Kennedy her vote when he telephoned her personally.

If the Democrats are to follow their party voters' wishes at least three of the four uncommitted delegates should go to Carter. This would give Carter 11 delegates and Kennedy 6. This would total 63 percent for Carter, almost identical to the 62 percent popular vote he received in the Idaho May presidential primary.

Veteran political observers would say without much contradiction that the liberal Kennedy

would run much weaker than Carter in Idaho in the general election. Regardless of this,

Republican Ronald Reagan likely will easily win the state, maybe by as much as 2-1.