

The election eye...

Crossover vote crucial in Hansen-Jones race

BY BEN J. PLASTINO

Post-Register political editor
U.S.Rep. George V.Hansen, R-Idaho, must be viewed as a decided favorite in his rematch with young Jerome attorney, Jim Jones, but an anticipated crossover vote to the Republican primary Tuesday raises certain doubts on outcome of this contest.

Both Hansen and Jones are aware of this and although Hansen feigns overflowing confidence he acknowledged in a interview with this writer Wednesday that it is an imponderable, which is hard to assess, along with the impact of the presidential contests on both tickets.

Hansen pointed out in his first skirmish with Jones two years ago it was the crossover vote that closed the gap and enabled him to win by only 35,736, or 55.5 percent, to Jones' 28,593, or 44.5 percent.

* * *

The crossover vote in Tuesday's election is anticipated to be even greater because a presidential contest, even in the primary, will draw a far larger than usual turnout. But even more important, there isn't a single major contest in the Democratic primary and only a few on the legislative and county levels. In 1978, there was a bitter congressional battle between Stan Kress and Ralph Harding, but this year only Diane Bilyer is the lone Democratic candidate.

Hansen won by only 8,490 votes in the 1978 primary, which would mean a shift of less than 5,000 votes could bring a Jones victory, actually less than 4,500. Thus, there is reason for Hansen and his avid supporters to be highly concerned.

The huge crossover by the Democrats and independents to the Republican primary could mean bad news to Hansen. Most of these can be expected to vote against Hansen, meaning that Jones will be the beneficiary. Both Hansen and Jones know this.

Hansen contends that the voters support him because of his aggressiveness in behalf of Idaho and the nation. This is true but it extends largely to his warmest followers. As observed previously, there are about 40 percent who are his dedicated backers but 40 percent who feel strongly against him. That leaves the crucial 20 percent swing vote that will decide the

The Post-Register The political pulse

Idaho Falls, Idaho, Sunday, May 25, 1980

C-5

* * *

In Hansen favor this year is a more vigorous campaigning and he contends he has better organization, particularly in Magic Valley, where his showing was comparatively weak in 1978. He said he will spend \$75,000, where two years ago his cost was only about \$15,000. He thus is not taking Jones lightly.

On the other hand, Jones has been intensely campaigning since last winter, although his organization is less than imposing. Two years ago he campaigned less than two months. He also is spending more than \$70,000 and his comparative moderate views will attract the moderate Republicans, Democrats and independents.

In East Idaho, for example, where Hansen always runs strong, there are few contests on the Democratic ticket but there are a number on the Republican ballot.

In Bonneville County, there's not a single local Democratic race but there are two on the Republican side, both interesting. One is for county commissioner between incumbent Tom Loertscher and Delmar Anderson and the other for state senator in Legislative District 31 between William Floyd and Don Penfold.

* * *

The presidential contests on both parties are expected to be lopsided — Ronald Reagan, who is highly popular in Idaho, prob-

ably rolling up better than a 4-1 margin over George Bush and others, and President Carter also a winner by more than 2-1 over Sen. Kennedy.

The Republican presidential results will determine the delegates to the national convention while the Democratic tally is little more than a beauty contest, although it likely will sway the four uncommitted votes. Eight are for Carter and five are for Kennedy on basis of the loosely held caucuses last month which hardly reflected the Democratic views as will be proven in the primary.

Signs point to a tight Hansen-Jones race, especially if there is a large turnout. A light vote likely will help Hansen. Hansen

must be favored but if there is a heavy Republican ballot don't be surprised if Jones noses through for a victory.