

The national picture . . .

Idaho congressional clout to remain strong

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Idaho, contrary to what many observers believe, will keep its powerful political clout at the nation's capital.

The defeat of U.S. Sen. Frank Church, D-Idaho, perhaps the most potent voice Idaho has had on Capitol Hill since the days of Sen. William Borah, had led many to believe that Idaho's voice may ebb to a whisper.

Along with that, the imminent departure of Secretary of Interior Cecil D. Andrus, former Idaho governor, is another factor that will diminish Idaho's influence.

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Whatever one says, Church's influence in Washington helped not only the state's welfare but thousands of its individual citizens. He built his rapport over 24 years and when he chose to throw his weight around, whether on a major project, or for an individual's senior citizen's benefits, it went a long way.

Sen. James A. McClure, R-Idaho, has served only one six-year term, but already has vaulted into leadership, probably the first time in history that Idaho has one of its distinguished sons in that role in Congress.

As conference (caucus) chairman, it means McClure will sit in on leadership meetings to help determine party and national policies. His strong following is

attested to by his defeat of Sen. John Heinz of Pennsylvania for the coveted position.

But McClure's standing is further enhanced by his advancement to chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, replacing Sen. Henry Jackson, D-Wash. This, to some extent, offsets the loss of Church on that same committee.

McClure is also a member of the Senate Appropriation Committee, which decides on funding for many projects of benefit to Idaho.

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Symms, as a newcomer, did very well in committee assignments, thanks in a large part to McClure's influence. Symms won appointment to the Finance Committee, and also to the Environment and Public Works, Budget, and Joint Economics committees.

Symms also is a member of the nuclear regulatory subcommittee, transportation subcommittee and environmental pollution subcommittee.

The nuclear regulatory subcommittee is of particular importance to Idaho because it has jurisdiction over the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, as well as licensing procedures for nuclear plants and waste disposal issues.

Symms' keenest disappointment is his failure to win a spot on the Agricultural Committee

because those with more seniority were ahead of him.

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Rep. George Hansen, R-Idaho, also can lend his weight as a member of the Agriculture Committee where he served when he was a Congressman in the 1960s. He also is a member of the Banking Committee.

Both McClure and Symms are members of the Republican majority in the Senate while Hansen still remains as a minority Republican in the House where the Democrats are still in control.

This also goes for the newly-elected Republican congressman from the 1st District, Larry Craig, a former state senator from Midvale. Committees have not been assigned yet to new House members.

Another powerful factor which does help Idaho immensely is Ronald Reagan, who must view Idaho with more than a warm feeling considering the enthusiastic receptions he has always received here and the fact this state gave him the larger percentage margin (66.5 to 25.2) over President Carter than any other state, except Utah.