

Batt girds effort for governor race

Mid July 22, 1981

BY BEN J. PLASTINO

Post-Register political editor

BOISE — Lt. Gov. Philip E. Batt, the only announced gubernatorial candidate, views the present reapportionment special session of the Idaho Legislature with interest but whatever is done he feels it will not greatly affect his campaign.

"I believe everyone (legislators) is trying to effect reapportionment in an objective fashion," said Batt. "It is natural for them to worry over the constituency of their people. Reapportionment is part of setting up good local government."

He had no firm conviction on the legislative redistricting except that Ada County should get another legislative district.

However, he did favor keeping Ada County intact in congressional reapportionment, although a bill has passed that will divide the county between the 1st and 2nd districts.

Batt also felt, along with Gov. John V. Evans, that some more money should be appropriated for the Office of Aging because it would save costs by keeping elderly people out of nursing homes and in their own homes.

Regarding his forthcoming gubernatorial campaign, Batt said he is pleased that he is getting more identification in the state.

"I want to see if we can't get state government pulling together instead of taxayers angered with public employees and the general attitude of public vs. people," he said. "I want to encourage business."

Batt said he felt he could do a better job of helping the state economy by his ability to pull efforts together in the business sector.

"I consider myself compatible with the conservatives in the Republican party," he said. "I consider myself a fiscal conservative and therefore I don't see any reason why any sector of the party can't support me."

"I'm doing a lots of organization work," he said. "So far, I have been concentrating on party people but likely will start my hand-to-hand campaign likely in November."

Batt said that since coming into office he has been holding down expenditures as much as possible.

He said three years ago when he took over the office, the office budget was \$57,000 but his budget the past year was only \$51,000 and he plans to turn back \$4,000 to \$5,000. Next year's budget is set at \$53,000, most of the increases attributable to some regulated salary raises.

"So, you see," he said, "in saving money."

Batt said he has raised about \$42,000 for his upcoming primary campaign and estimates he will spend \$200,000. If he wins the nomination, he plans to spend \$200,000 more in for the general election campaign.

He said he sees his Republican adversaries as House Speaker Ralph Olmstead, Twin Falls, Attorney General David Leroy, and possibly former House Speaker Allan F. Larsen, Blackfoot, who won the nomination three years ago.

"I would like to see a two-man field," he said. "Polls I have seen indicate I can beat Governor Evans only if there is not a sizeable exodus of Republicans. I believe I do appeal to a broad base of people. I believe I have done a good job as lieutenant governor."

Batt, now 54, pointed out he has an excellent background to take over the state's No. 1 job, serving 12 years in the Legislature, of which six were in the leadership, six as Senate majority leader and two as Senate president pro tem. He is an onion farmer at Wilder.

Olmstead sees no problem

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BOISE — House Speaker Ralph Olmstead, R-Twin Falls, said Tuesday he does not believe his forthcoming gubernatorial announcement Sept. 8 will harm his effectiveness as a House-speaker in the current special reapportionment session or the 1982 regular session.

Olmstead said that in the current session he is not seeking re-election as state representative and can view the present reapportionment proceedings free from personal interests.

"Whatever reapportionment proposal is enacted will not directly affect my gubernatorial campaign," he said.

Olmstead said he likely will announce from his home base in Twin Falls and then follow with trips to other sections of the state but this has not been definitely determined as yet.

In a Post-Register interview while at the special session, Olmstead said of his dual role as speaker and gubernatorial candidate "I feel that I can act fairly without any political overtones."

Olmstead said there is not enough support to give Boise an extra legislative district outright but there is opposition to combining Elmore and Owyhee counties into a single district, along with a small portion of south Ada county. Such a consolidation would pit two veteran Republican Senate leaders against each other, Caucus Chairman Walter Yarbrough and Assistant Majority Leader Wilson Steen, Glenns Ferry.

Olmstead expressed hope suspension of the rules can be obtained to let the special session to complete its legislative reapportionment task this week.

Olmstead said the rules suspension which calls for a two-thirds majority is necessary if a reapportionment measure is to pass, or else it would take five or six days more. The rules suspension enables three readings of a bill in a single day or else it would take six days—readings on three successive days in each chamber.

He said the Senate-passed joint resolution calling for study of the Boise urban renewal project is not necessary, adding if such an audit is necessary it could be done by the Joint Finance Appropriation Committee. The House State Affairs Committee killed this resolution 13-4 Friday.

Olmstead said his campaign will emphasize the need for a choice to "elect a governor who will work well with the Legislature and to provide an environment to improve the business economy."

He said he will soon be selecting campaign coordinators in each county. He also said he is not optimistic about the state's economy.

Olmstead said that education will continue to get top priority and that the Legislature will strive to appropriate more money for education.

He also said Les Purce, new director of the Department of Health and Welfare, should be given a chance to work out the abbreviated regional management system.