

the election eye . . .

May primary expected to draw more interest

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The early 1980 primary election will bring drastic changes in campaigning that should whet the political appetite.

The 1979 Idaho Legislature moved the primary election from August to the last Tuesday in May to coincide with the quadrennial presidential election.

The immediate result is to move up the primary campaign from the politically dull summer months of June and July to the more active winter and spring months, and also to give better chances for outsiders to win.

Considerable credit must be given to legislators who voted for changing of the date, even though it could harm them. That's because they are attending the Legislature January, February and most of March, drastically cutting their time for campaigning. Also their legislative records will be fresh on the minds of the voters, especially if they are bad.

Another wholesome development is the certainty many more voters will turn out to cast ballots for presidential contenders before they embark on summer vacations.

In Idaho, the voters can expect to hear presidential contenders late this fall, winter and spring in advance of the primary. As several Western States also are holding spring presidential primaries it will be convenient for them to stop in Idaho while on a western swing.

The 1976 May primary coaxed out larger number of voters than usual for a primary even though only presidential contenders of both parties were on the ballot. The fact senatorial, congressional legislators and many county officers will be voted on at the same time in 1980 should attract an even greater turnout.

Another beneficial effect will be the conduct of legislators whose voting record will come under closer scrutiny because they must face the electors soon after the session adjourns. In the past, the primary was held in August and most voters had generally forgotten the Legislature performance.

Also on the plus side is drawing those voters who in the past have skipped primaries but are anxious to cast ballots for presidential contenders. In the August primaries, only those more politically oriented bothered to turn out. As a result, the extremists on both the right and left held an advantage. This, hopefully, will not be the case in the future as more moderate voters flock to the polls.

The Republican Party usually attracts twice the votes of the Democrats in an Idaho primary because they generally have more interesting races on both the state and local level. The coming year should be no exception with a large field vying for the presidential nomination while President Carter and Sen. Frank Church likely will not be opposed by any formidable candidate for the Democratic nomination.

No state offices are up for election in 1980 but there will be races for all the legislators, two county commissioners, prosecuting attorney, sheriff and precinct committeemen, plus the senatorial and two congressional posts. In

Bonneville the clerk's position also will be on the ballot because of the recent death of Clerk DelRoy Bodily. Republican Ron Longmore was named to fill the post until the election and he plans to run for election.

If past practices are followed

there will be a welcome summer lull with the active campaigning by the nominees to resume after Labor Day in early September for the November general elections.

This should make for more interesting campaigns and elections in 1980.



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Political palaver

BOISE — Lt. Gov. Philip E. Batt, left, chats with Sen. Dean Van Engelen, R-Burley, a possible U.S. senatorial candidate, during a brief recess in the last session of the Idaho Legislature.