

The Post-Register

The political pulse

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The election eye

Issues begin to boil for election campaign

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Idaho's political campaign is reaching the homestretch and a few issues have developed which should give voters a better opportunity to decide on a choice for the Nov. 2 general election.

Most candidates complain there is an apathy but this has been a criticism in nearly all past elections although Idaho's voting percentage record is one of the best in the nation. This election lacks the aura of a senatorial contest but there is a number of interesting congressional, state, legislative and county races which should whet the political appetite.

Mrs. Ellen Bingham, Bonneville election clerk, also expressed fear of lack of interest, noting the registration appears to be declining rather than increasing because of people moving away, deaths and lack of interest in registering.

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In the congressional race between Republican U.S. Rep. George Hansen and his Democratic challenger, Richard Stallings, the main issue centers on Stallings' charge that Hansen is ineffective in working for legislation to benefit Idaho, concentrating instead on emotional topics that have little substance.

In this latest blast, Stallings cites Hansen's negative vote on the farm bill and supplemental appropriation bill that funded many farm and other essential agencies. He also notes the Palisades Dam enlargement measure died in House committee, and alleged Hansen didn't lift a finger to help.

Although not mentioned of late, Hansen's financial affairs which the Wall Street Journal exposed, also remain an ominous campaign factor.

As usual, Hansen largely ignores his opponent and generally confines his rhetoric to blasts against big government and deficit spending. He arrogantly didn't reply to Stallings' latest charges and has avoided head-to-head debate, which can't help but hurt him on election day.

He has refused to answer to newsmen on The Wall Street Journal story, declaring he has reported properly to the IRS and other federal agencies.

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The gubernatorial hassle between Democratic Gov. John V. Evans and his Republican challenger, Lt. Gov. Philip E. Batt, has concentrated on Republican criticism over Evans' handling of the state's financial affairs. Evans

was charged with pushing state payroll obligations and income tax refunds into the new fiscal year. Batt acknowledges this is not illegal but that it is poor administrative judgment.

The sluggish economy is a prime issue and the candidates advance their own theories on how this can be overcome, each stressing need for future growth.

The Right-To-Work proposal has not become the leading emotional issue first expected. That's probably because it is a two-edged sword that has as many disadvantages and advantages in taking a firm stand. Evans has traditionally opposed it; Batt has expressed favor.

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In the lieutenant governor race, Attorney General David L. Leroy cleverly takes advantage of his legal position to issue opinions on state issues, such as the state financial situation, ERA and others. His opponent, Democrat Mike Mitchell, Lewiston state senator, underscores the point that as a longtime business man and at age 57, he can bring business expertise. He contrasts that with Leroy's skimpy business experience primarily in the public sector experience as attorney general and prosecuting attorney and only 35 years of age.

For attorney general, Republican Jim Jones and Democrat J. D. Williams each advocate tougher criminal laws and update of the criminal code.

Williams has enrolled the endorsement of 27 of the state's 44 prosecuting attorneys, including seven Republicans, on the contention he has more extensive legal experience and is better qualified. Jones challenges this, pointing to his private practice and active political role, besides being well versed in agricultural interest as part owner of the family cattle feeding business.

For state auditor, Democrat Joe Williams, who as served the longest of any with 24 years, contends he is still fit to efficiently perform the job, even though 78. His Republican challenger, Nolan G. Young, Boise, charges Williams with sloppy auditing practices and cites his own CPA experience.

The state treasurer race between Democrat State Treasurer Marjorie Moon and Republican Doyle C. Miner, Boise, former St. Anthony legislator, is notable because it is barely noticed. Miss Moon issues releases on wise investments of state funds while Miner asserts there is need for a change.