The Post-Register

The political pulse

Idaho Falls, Idaho, Sunday, October 17, 1982 C-

The election eye

Republicans do far better in campaigns than do Democrats

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Even though Idaho Democrats may do well in the coming state elections, the Republicans are far better heeled and mount more intensive campaigns.

This was forcibly brought to attention when all of the state Republican candidates and party leaders rode in three privately-chartered airplanes Wednesday for a barnstorming aerial tour of Idaho's eight major cities Wednesday in a so-called "Republican Victory Flight." State Chairman Dennis M. Olsen said the planes were donated by a benefactor which he declined to disclose.

A gala "Go to Batt for Idaho" banquet featuring National Republican Chairman Richard Richards in Idaho Falls Thursday night also was paid for by the Phil Batt for Governor Committee, as listed on the $10 per plate tickets.

Batt hired a bus for a caravan which called on nearly 200 cities and hamlets in September. He was joined by other Republican state and local candidates from time to time on this tour.

The Democrats, so far, have no such elaborate statewide plans, with each of the major candidates going their own separate but apparently happy ways.

This contrasting difference is also in effect in the state party offices and particularly so on the national level.

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The Idaho Republican Headquarters at Boise has a fulltime executive director, Jim Davis, with three fulltime clerks. The Idaho Democratic Headquarters has one woman in charge, Rita Sallaz, who is on duty only in the forenoon, and another, Susan Boyd, who is added in the afternoon only for the 2½ months preceding the election.

Olsen, an Idaho Falls attorney, is extremely active at party functions and joined the aerial junket Wednesday. His Democratic counterpart, Marie Hanzel, Burley, employed at a Twin Falls attorney office, has hardly been heard from during this campaign.

All of the Republican state candidates are quartered on one spacious floor at the state campaign headquarters at Boise, but have their own separate office space. They all grind out press releases and disseminate campaign literature.

Gov. John V. Evans has his own full-fledged campaign headquarters while State Sen. Mike P. Mitchell, Lewiston, lieutenant governor nominee, is the only other state Democrat with a campaign headquarters and staff worthy of its name.

The latest report showed the 1982 gubernatorial race expenses have exceeded $1 million, led by Batt's two-year total of $441,518 for both his primary and general election camapigns. Evans has announced he plans to spend close to a half million but he had no primary competition.

The other state Democratic candidates conduct their own campaign individually as best they can but lack fulltime campaign workers.

The Democrats are poorer but apparently they gear their campaigns to the poor as there are many more of them than the rich, so they say.

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On the national level, the disrepancy is even more pronounced. The Federal Election Commission reported Republicans spent about eight times more than the Democrats in the 1979-89 campaign, or $266,620,00 to $35,240,000. This year through June 30, the Republicans raised $146,250,000 and spent $210,950,000 while the Democrats raised only $18,880,000 and spent $17,210,000, thus avoiding the deficit spending of the Republicans.

Apparently due to lack of a senatorial race, not many big political names came to Idaho for the campaign.

The Democrats had House Majority Leader Jim Wright at Boise while the Republicans countered with National Republican Chairman Richard Richards in Idaho Falls and Pocatello and former national chairman William Brock at Boise the past week. Richards' appearance had much of the importance removed when he announced beforehand he will leave his post at the end of the year amid rumors he had been forced out.

Eastern Idaho is expected to be a swing area which may determine a number of expected close state races.

Batt plans to come in the area Friday for a last minute appeal for votes.

Evans has scheduled appearances for Oct. 25 and then a statewide aerial jaunt on the Saturday before the election, Oct. 30, covering the major cities of the state.

Leaders of both parties are worried over the apparent apathy of the voters, although they think interest will perk up as the election draws closer. A light vote could help Republicans, a heavy turnout usually, but not always, favors the Democrats.