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The political pulse

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The 1983 Idaho Legislature

Most favor primary put back to August

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the 13th in a series of 14 articles giving the views of eastern Idaho legislators on issues in the coming session. This one is on election law changes)

BY BEN J. PLASTINO
Post-Register political editor

Most eastern Idaho legislators favor moving the May primary election back to August because campaigning lasts too long under the current system.

However, Senate President Pro Tem James Risch, R-Boise, who carries a powerful voice in such matters, opposes any election law changes and his sentiments probably will prevail.

The vast majority favor eliminating the May presidential primary and moving it to August. A few suggested September.

For the 1978 elections, the Legislature changed the primary from August, a fixture for many years, to May to allow the presidential preferential vote.

Among those favoring dropping the May primary and moving back to August are Sens. Israel Merrill, D-Blackfoot; Mark G. Ricks, R-Rexburg; Vearl C. Crystal, R-Rigby; and William L. Floyd, R-Idaho Falls; and Reps. John O. Sessions, R-Driggs; Ray E. Infanger, R-Salmon; Melvin Hammond, D-Rexburg; J. F. Chadband, R-Idaho Falls; Rich Orme, R-St. Anthony; Kurt L. Johnson, R-Idaho Falls; and Linden B. Bateman, R-Idaho Falls.

All who commented said they opposed any convention endorsement for state and congressional candidates. This calls for delegates to biennial state convention to endorse such primary candidates with at least 20 percent of the votes, and in some cases, it has been 25 percent. This was in vogue for a couple of elections some 20 years ago but was dropped.

Some bills requiring convention endorsements have been introduced in recent years but have lacked support and never came close to enactment.

Rep. Martin Trillhaase, R-Idaho Falls, said he would want no changes now.

"We have shifted the primary very often," commented Rep. Gary L. Paxman, R-Idaho Falls. "Let's stay where it is at present. Let's be cost effective on these elections also."

Along the same line, Sen. Dane Watkins, R-Idaho Falls, chairman of the Senate Local Government and Taxation Committee, said he favors a September primary but added "with other problems of such great magnitude, any changes in the election laws will probably be put on the back burner."

Sen. J. Marsden Williams, R-Idaho Falls, said he leaned to a May primary and does not want a fall primary to interfere with the county budget-setting process in September.

"I favor shortening up the election time-frame," explained Floyd. "Very few of us are fulltime politicians. This would allow more involvement by good citizens."

Merrill, in urging repeal of the presidential primary and moving the primary from May to August, said "it was better the old way. I have experienced both."

"Presidential primaries do not serve any purpose in Idaho," said Hammond in urging the return to August elections.

Infanger, with one of his frequent wry comments, said in favoring return to the August primary, "the best solution is to shorten and campaign and cut expenses. Even the people get sick and tired of long campaigns. Only the news media profits."

Idaho governor undecided on future political plans

By BEN J. PLASTINO
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Gov. John V. Evans, seemingly relaxed in comparison with the start of the last Legislature, said Tuesday he has no political plans now beyond 1986 when his term expires.

In view of his repeated announcement he will not seek re-election, the governor in a telephone interview Tuesday with the Post-Register insisted he is concerned mainly in guiding the ship of state on a progressive course for the next four years.

"I don't have any plans" he replied to a question of what he will do after 1986. "I'm dedicated in

terms of the next four years to go ahead with state government.

"I want to be able to attract industry and business in Idaho. This does not necessarily mean new business but to get the present businesses to expand."

The Idaho governor, with no political axes to grind, said his main theme is to prepare Idaho people for the future.

He said his aim for recovery is geared to agriculture, forestry, mining and business, with particular emphasis on the high technology development.