The Post-Register

The political pulse

The election eye

Politics hike tempo for election campaign

By BEN J. PLASTINO
Post-Register political editor

It didn't take long after the Labor Day weekend for politics to acclerate its tempo for the expected bruising campaign leading to the Nov. 2 general election.

On Wednesday, nearly all of the leading politicians were on hand in Idaho Falls which is expected to be the key territory in deciding many expected close races. The occasion was the formal openings of the county party headquarters of Republicans and Democrats. This is the first time that can be remembered that the occasions took place on the same day.

It fittingly signaled off the formal campaign in eastern Idaho.

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Most of the leading contenders of both parties were present to sound their political views to partisan supporters and also gain public exposure. It was a proper setting that will launch the candidates for congressional and state offices on a rigorous two months tour of the state.

On the scene were Democrats Gov. John V. Evans; Auditor Joe Williams, State Sen. Mike Mitchell, for lieutenant governor; and J.D. Williams, for attorney general; and Republicans Congressman George Hansen, Lt. Gov. Philip E. Batt, and Jim Jones, nominee for attorney general. The Republicans formally opened their headquarters at Shoup and B St. Plaza at 9 a.m. while two hours later the Democrats threw their headquarters' doors open just a block away at the Bonneville Hotel.

Of the leading candidates for contested offices, only Richard Stallings, Rexburg, Democratic congressional nominee, was unable to attend because of appearing Wednesday morning for the wedding of his brother-in-law at Ogden. Stallings opened his own campaign headquarters Friday night at Rexburg at the former Porter printing complex at 20 N. 2nd East near the Madison County Courthouse. Some 75 well-wishers attended, including Williams, the attorney general nominee.

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The Wednesday activities in Idaho Falls are significant because they underline the importance of eastern Idaho as a decisive battle ground. As so often in the past, close elections likely will be decided in Bonneville County and eastern Idaho.

All of the contested offices appear fairly close, although the crucial battles are yet to be fought. The two headline races, those between Evans and Batt, and for 2nd District congressman between Hansen and Stallings, could be tight. Most give slight edges to the incumbents, Evans and Hansen, but this could change before the campaign is over.

The other battles also are not runaways. They pit Republican Attorney General David H. Leroy against Mitchell for lieutenant governor, Democrat Auditor Williams against Nolan G. Young for state auditor; Democrat Treasurer Marjorie Ruth Moon against Doyle Miner; and Democrat J. D. Williams, Preston, against Jim Jones, Burley, for attorney general. Unopposed are Republican Secretary of State Pete T. Cenarrusa and State School Supt. Jerry Evans. The incumbents must be given varying advantages while the attorney general race could be a tossup at this time.

Also to furnish added interest are the many legislative and county candidates, most of whom face contests.

The past summer activities were comparatively placed with the gubernatorial, congressional and attorney general candidates the most active. There was the Republican barbecue and Democratic picnic and the brief apearances of U.S. Sens. Robert Dole, R-Kan., and James A. McClure, R-Idaho. A number of big national names likely will appear during the campaign.