

Stallings seeks to win crucial independent voters in Idaho

By BEN J. PLASTINO
Post-Register political editor

Richard H. Stallings, who seeks to leave the staid classrooms at Ricks College to become a congressman in the hustle and bustle at the nation's capital, makes no secret that he is especially concentrating on winning the independent vote.

Stallings, a robust, energetic 41-year-old candidate, hardly typifies a college instructor.

He has always been interested in politics and ran two fairly close races for the state Legislature in District 31, a heavy Republican area. He also had the disadvantages of residing in the remote Lyman precinct south of Rexburg. Only Lyman and Archer precincts from Madison County are included in District 31 which is made up primarily of east Bonneville and Teton counties.

He also managed the campaign of Stan Kress for Congress which gave him an excellent insight into the political campaigning process.

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In a nutshell, Stallings is bidding for the majority of the crucial 10 to 15 percent of the so-called independent voters.

Stallings also hopes to win the moderate Republicans who do not feel comfortable with the ultra conservative followers who have increasingly dominated the party since Republican Gov. Robert E. Smylie was ousted 15 years ago.

Stallings figures his election strategy this way: His opponent, Republican Congressman George V. Hansen, has about 45 percent hard core followers but he also has about 42 percent who would vote against him regardless who is his opponent. That leaves about 17 percent who will decide the election.

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These are only approximate figures and could vary as much as 5 percent one way or another but it gives a rough idea of the political situation in the 2nd District Congress race.

About the same situation faced Democrat Sen. Frank Church in 1980 and when a formidable candidate and political conditions came about, he was toppled.

Stallings said that in 1980 when there was a strong Reagan and Republican tide, Hansen ran the weakest of any major Republican candidate. He only polled 58 percent of the votes against Democrat Diane Bilyeu, Pocatello realtor.

Mrs. Bilyeu spent only some \$30,000, about a fourth of what it cost Hansen, and waged a less than spectacular intensive campaign.

Stallings comes from the Upper Snake River Valley which generally decides elections, has strong backers from all religious affiliations, including those of his own Mormon Church; and is spending full time campaigning.

Mrs. Bilyeu had the disadvantage of coming from Pocatello which is heavily Democratic anyway; and frankly, records show that a significant portion of voters in east Idaho will not vote for a woman for high office.

Another important factor is shifting 21,500 people in Ada County from the 1st to the 2nd district under congressional reapportionment this year. These are largely Democratic precincts in the northern and western sections of Boise which Hansen has never won, and even lost by 2-1 margins.

Stallings hopes to overcome the money and incumbency disadvantages by wearing out a lot of shoe leather in personal campaigning throughout the 26 south Idaho counties in his district. He expects to personally meet most of the voters in this fashion.

Stallings encouraged in campaign

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"It is encouraging" was the way Richard H. Stallings, Ricks College history professor, described his campaigning for the 2nd District congressional seat.

Stallings did not rest after winning a decisive May 25 primary election over George

Anthony of Filer, which he viewed as an excellent test for his campaign organization. He immediately continued at a vigorous pace for the Nov. 2 general election in an effort to unseat Republican Congressman George V. Hansen.

In a Post-Register interview, Stallings said he has raised about \$12,000 in his goal for \$60,000. He noted that Hansen so far has only raised \$34,000 but Stallings expects to be outspent by more than 2-1.

"I'm hoping for a lots of support from independents and also moderate Republicans," said Stallings. "Things look good in the entire district, from Ada County on the west eastward to Idaho Falls and the Upper Snake River Valley.

"Idaho is not a one party state and I believe Democrats have as good chance for victory as do Republicans if they make the effort."

Stallings said he feels he is especially strong in Ada County, the Idaho Falls and Upper Snake River Valley area, even in southeast corner of the state, and expects to win big in Democratic Pocatello area.

"I have even noticed a slippage for Hansen in the Twin

Falls area where he has run strong," said Stallings.

Stallings lamented the efforts of Hansen and his backers to take credit for helping in the Teton Dam reimbursement.

Stallings pointed out it was Sen. Frank Church who led in introducing the two reimbursement bills, assisted in part by Sen. James McClure. Hansen's activities were limited to his sponsoring companion legislation in the House.

"Actually," said Stallings, "Hansen has no legislative achievement to his credit since serving in Congress. As far as I know he has never succeeded alone in enacting one single major piece of legislation.

"Hansen's successes have been in the judicial, not legislative field, and any ordinary citizens could have done this."

Stallings pointed out Hansen has done well in the judicial field against the Occupational Safety and Health Act, Internal Revenue Service and the Immigration and Naturalization Act.

"It appears Hansen is more concerned in whipping up emotional issues, rather than concentrating his attention to substantive legislation that will help Idahoans," said Stallings.

Stallings said he finds the

slumping economy is working against Republicans and for the Democrats, although most people are willing to give more time for the Reagan economic programs to take hold.

Stallings also said many are upset and feel it was unfair for Hansen to vote for budget cuts, yet he voted with a minority to allow congressmen to write off expenses for living in Washington.

Stallings noted that Reagan also vetoed a bill that would have rescinded for members of Congress the privilege of writing off \$75 per day expenses for living in Washington, which would amount to about \$19,000 a year. Most have taken advantage of all or part of this tax advantage not given to others, he noted.

"I think it is time for members of Congress to also bite the bullet, the same as the average tax-payers are doing," said Stallings.



Richard H. Stallings