

The Post-Register

The political pulse

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The election eye

Early signs indicate heavy election vote

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Enthusiasm expressed at both the Democratic and Republican state conventions, the early campaigning by congressional and many state candidates, and the heavy voter registration indicate there could be a heavy turnout for the Nov. 2 general election.

The 1980 general election saw the Democrats buried under a Republican flood that ousted Democrat Sen. Frank Church, increased Republican margins in both houses of the Idaho Legislature, and even sent many local Democrat incumbents on the county level spinning into defeat.

The exhilaration expressed at the Idaho Democratic Convention at Coeur d'Alene last week would indicate a new-found confidence and a rebound from the 1980 political debacle.

The Idaho Republican Convention delegates, also meeting last week at Coeur d'Alene, expressed similar determination to retain or even tighten their grip in the state.

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Both Democrats and Republicans admit the state of the economy later this year may have an important political bearing, at least indirectly. If the economy, particularly high interest rates and unemployment, remain high, the Democrats likely will benefit at the polls. A downward turn could benefit Republicans.

Both congressional and most state races look tight at this time.

Among the candidates, Gov. John V. Evans, Sen. Mike P. Mitchell, Democratic nominee for lieutenant governor; Richard Stallings, Democratic candidate for 2nd District congressman; and Lt. Gov. Phil Batt, Republican gubernatorial nominee; and Attorney General David H. Leroy for lieutenant governor appear to be the

most actively campaigning at this early stage.

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The Idaho May 25 primary election turnout was the lowest in years but registration indicates a vibrant interest for the general election in November.

In Idaho, the secretary of state reported the registration at an all-time primary high of 526,556. Of this number, only 154,938 cast ballots, for a lowly 29.42 percent. This compares with the primary of two years ago when 199,995 voted, a creditable 41.34 percent of the 483,564 registered.

In the November 1980, general election, when interest was at a zenith because of the presidential contest between President Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan and the senatorial fracas between Church and Steve Symms, a record 456,446 cast ballots. This was an excellent 76.77 percent of the 581,008 registered.

It is possible this turnout may be rivaled this November with interest particularly high in the gubernatorial and congressional races. Added to these are the many county contests which were not on the ballot in 1980, plus greater competition for legislative offices.

Bonneville County lagged in the state with only 8,763 casting ballots, 26 percent of the 33,597 registered, in this year's primary.

In Idaho, the primary attracted a high of 76.1 percent in Camas, the smallest county in the state, and a low of only 11.71 percent in Latah, due primarily to many University of Idaho students being registered but not voting.

The secretary of state predicted the registration for the general election will reach near the all-time record of 581,008 registered in 1980. This also is indicated in Bonneville County where registration already has topped 34,000 and may attain close to the 38,015 registered in 1980. At that time, an all-time record of 32,488 cast ballots, an amazing 85.4 percent.