The election eye

Incumbents favored in close local races

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There are only four races on the local level, two in which incumbents are seeking re-election and two which are wide open.

In view of past election results, incumbents must be favored in their contests, although they face tough opposition and could be tripped up.

It is unfortunate the majority of county incumbents are unopposed because it does not give a fair assessment as to whether voters approve of them. In absence of the competition, it must then be assumed they are doing at least a satisfactory job.

Unopposed are Bonneville County Commissioner Clyde A. Burtenshaw, Democrat; and County Clerk Ron Longmore, County Treasurer Mabel Bingham; and County Coroner Vern Rydalch, all Republicans. The term of Sheriff Richard Ackerman does not expire until 1984 while Republican Commissioner Tom Loertscher is a holdover for two more years.

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Two Republican incumbents, County Commissioner A. Wylie Snarr and Assessor John Wasden must be given the edge in their contests.

Snarr, who is completing a four-year term, faces an attractive Democrat challenger in Jerry Scheid.

Scheid hammers on the need for a change while Snarr, 72, contends he is spending full time on what is supposed to be a parttime job.

Wasden is opposed by two — Aaron Robinson, a former Republican assessor but now running under the Democrat label, and an independent write-in, Sherman Norris, whom Wasden defeated in the Republican primary by only 150 votes.

It has been an age-old axiom that when three or more are entered for one position, the opposition vote is split and thus generally aids the incumbent. This likely will hold true for this election. Norris, on basis of his primary preformance, would appear formidable if his name were on the ballot but it is unlikely great numbers of voters will go to the trouble of writing in the name on the envelope after punching out the names in the computer ballot. Past election records show Robinson's support falls decisively short of a majority.

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The two wide open contests are for 7th judicial district judge to succeed the retiring Judge Willard Burton, Rexburg, and for Bonneville County prosecuting attorney to replace Prosecutor Jerry Woolf, who is not seeking re-election.

Mainly because of location, Grant Young, who lives in nearby Rigby, a former Bonneville resiidden but who has served as Rigby magis trate, must be given the edge over Reid K. Larsen, Blackfoot attorney and former Bingham prosecutor. Young comfortably led a field of four in the primary and there is no reason to expect he will not do so again. In addition, he received the endorsement of the two losing candidates, Magistrate Earl Reynolds, St. Anthony, and Brian Coates, Blackfoot attorney.

The situation is somewhat similar for Bonneville prosecutor where Democratic Bill Combo and Republican Kimball Mason are paired.

The edge goes to Combo, primarily because Woolf has endorsed him as the most capable and experienced. He also said Combo will be less susceptible to outside pressure and advocacy groups. It also must be noted that both Woolf and Combo are Democrats and Combo has planned to hire Woolf as a parttime deputy which isn't a bad idea.

The local races furnish only the appetizers for the major contests on the congressional and state level but they could be interesting.