

The election eye . . .

Reagan's appearance boosts Symms chances

By BEN J. PLASTINO
Post-Register political editor

The appearance of Republican presidential contender Ronald Reagan in Idaho Falls Tuesday had to help boost the candidacy of Rep. Steve Symms, in what looks like a tight senatorial race with Democrat Sen. Frank Church.

This was indicated as Reagan repeatedly called on Idaho people to support Symms, who could help him in the Senate if Reagan is elected president.

The popularity of national figures very seldom rubs off on other people, but in a race as such as the one for U.S. senator in Idaho, every bit helps and no one knows that better than Reagan and Symms.

* * *

Reagan is probably the most popular political figure in Idaho at present, with the possible exception of U.S. Sen. James A. McClure.

This is indicated by his past voting record in Idaho where he sought the presidential nomination twice.

In the May 1980 presidential primary, Reagan rolled up 111,609 votes, or 83 percent, compared with only 13,093, or 10 percent, for John Anderson; 5,437, or 4 percent, for George Bush, and 1,214, or 1 percent, for Phil Crane. Anderson had switched to an independent but it was too late to remove his name from the Republican ballot.

Reagan won 17 of the 21 delegates but with Anderson's withdrawal as a Republican contender, Reagan wound up with all of Idaho's 21 delegates in the National Republican Convention at Detroit in July.

The Post-Register The political pulse

Idaho Falls, Idaho, Wednesday, October 15, 1980

E-7

In the Democratic primary, President Carter amassed 31,393 votes, or 62 percent, compared with only 11,145 for Sen. Ted Kennedy, or 22 percent, and 5,824 undecided, or 12 percent. In the national convention, Carter won 9 of Idaho's delegates while Kennedy took 8.

* * *

Reagan's showing in the 1976 presidential primary in Idaho also was impressive in view of the fact he was not that well known, as compared with President Ford, for example.

In that May primary, Reagan gleaned 66,415 votes, or 74 percent, compared with only 22,200 for Ford, or 26 percent.

Reagan thus won 16 of the 21 delegates in the national convention that year in Kansas City but it wasn't enough. Ford got Idaho's other 5 delegates and won the nomination in a tight battle but lost the general election to Carter.

In that same year, Idaho's own Sen. Frank Church, who was running for president, attracted 58,122 votes, or 80 percent, compared with Carter's 8,758, or only 12 percent. In fact, Church beat Carter in a half dozen states he entered but he ran out of money and faded as a prime contender.

If one recalls, the belated entry of California Gov. Jerry Brown torpedoed Church's hopes who was banking on California's big convention votes. When Church couldn't get these, his chances were blasted.

* * *

It's obvious that Reagan isn't coming to Idaho to pad his already overwhelming lead of 2-1, or 3-1, about what all polls show him to be ahead.

He can only get Idaho's

skimpy 4 electoral votes compared with the 539 that are on the line and the 270 needed for election. In fact Reagan is conceded all of the Western States with exception of those on the Pacific Coast, California, the key state;

and Washington and Oregon.

But on basis of Idaho's voting pattern it would appear that if any one could help Symms by his presence it it would be Reagan. Whether it is enough remains to be seen on election day Nov. 4.