

Veteran legislator won't run again

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By BEN J. PLASTINO

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State Rep. Kurt L. Johnson, R-Idaho Falls, a nine-term legislator, announced Friday he would forego re-election, saying "nine terms are enough. This is the end."

Johnson, 68, a native of Idaho Falls, said he likely will do part-time work on his farm on East River Road which he leased to his brother, Max Johnson, two years ago.

He also said he will consider serving an LDS Mission with his wife, Lucille, if he gets a call.

Johnson, with 18 years in the Legislature, is fifth in seniority in the House. He has served as chairman of the House Education Committee the past 12 years and is also a senior member of the House Resources and Conservation Committee.

He represents Legislative District 29 which embraces west Bonneville and Butte County.

His forthcoming departure prompts conjecture on his successor.

Among those who have indicated interest to The Post-Register and local political leaders are Mike Crapo, Idaho Falls attorney and brother of the late former House Majority Leader Terry Crapo; M. Reed Hansen, well-known Idaho Falls farmer, member and former chairman of the Idaho Water Resources Board; and Robert Hammond, president of Arnold Machinery Co., Republicans; and Jerry Scheid, farmer-rancher, and Phil Jordin, farmer, who each ran for county commissioner, both Democrats.

Johnson said he may resign later in the summer to give his successor an edge for the November elections.

"I have enjoyed my work and it has been enriching," Johnson told The Post-Register in an interview. "I feel I have now served long enough."

Johnson said he plans to announce his retirement to the House late Friday morning when his wife and some of his children and grandchildren are in the gallery.

Johnson was second in seniority in the east Idaho delegation to Rep. John O. Sessions, R-Driggs, who is vice chairman of the House Education Committee but is also chairman of the House Transportation Committee.

Johnson pointed out he has been a strong supporter of education, citing his backing for increased funding for public education this year. He noted he voted against a bill this session which would have provided \$221 million for public education, only a \$6 million hike from the current term. He said he believes public education should have at least a \$10 million increase.



Rep. Kurt L. Johnson

"How much public education will get will be largely determined on what the Senate does to the \$20.3 million for teacher salary increases the House passed earlier," said Johnson.

Johnson served in World War II, a year in the infantry and three years in the Air Corps.

He is a graduate of Idaho Falls High School and attended Ricks College a semester.

In the nine times he has run for election, he was unopposed three times and he won the other six times by usually decisive margins.

Mr. and Mrs. Johnson are the parents of eight children and four foster children. They have 27 grandchildren and three foster grandchildren.

Johnson is the second legislator from east Idaho to announce his retirement from the Legislature after this year. The first a month ago was House Minority Leader Melvin Hammond, D-Rexburg, who served eight two-year terms. Hammond announced he has been named to serve as president of an LDS Spanish-speaking mission but his assignment as yet has not been designated, he said.