

Forum

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A 50-50 chance Hansen will run for former post

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The appearance of former Rep. George V. Hansen and his wife, Connie, at the east Idaho Republican barbecue rally last week in Idaho Falls raises the question of how serious he is about seeking his old seat.

The fact the Hansens made the long trip from Washington on their own gives credence to the possibility that Hansen, or probably his wife, might enter what looks like an overcrowded field in the Republican 2nd District congressional race.

"I'm now free to do the things in life I've wanted to do," he said in an interview at the rally. "I have lots of things planned."

"My chances of running for Congress are about 50-50. I think it's fine for all of the candidates to enter. It encourages competition, and it shows there is lots of life in the old party."

Hansen said he could not say at this time whether he is leaning for or against running. He said if he did run he likely would announce his intentions late this fall, probably in November.

Of course he is happy there is a large field because the more candidates the more certain he is to be nominated. That's because he has many dedicated followers, leaving the opposition to split the remaining vote.

"I'm here to introduce the speaker and that's all," he said with a grin. The speaker was Arnaud de Borchgrave, editor-in-chief of the Washington Times, a conservative newspaper and owned by the Unification Church. That church is headed by the controversial Rev. Sun Myung Moon, who has launched a nonsectarian organization that's promoting the right wing conservative philosophy. It is led by Causa, the church's political arm.



George Hansen

DeBorchgrave contends the church has no control over the newspaper policies, a remark that can't help but raise eyebrows.

Only about 450 attended the rally, which is well below the 600 or more who usually attend.

Hansen said the name of his private consulting firm is George Hansen and Associates. He said he is prepared to launch a blitz next month aimed at the Internal Revenue Service, a longtime target of the former congressman.

He already has paid staff members, including his Idaho Falls representative, John Scoresby, but he added he is depending on many volunteers to carry his message nationwide. His office staff at Washington is headed by his former assistant, Alice Tate.

From this view it would appear there are two main factors that will

decide if Hansen will seek to regain his old congressional seat: how well he does financially in his private consulting businesses, and if he can clear his conviction last year of filing false campaign financial disclosures. He is appealing the case, which resulted in a sentence of up to 15 months in prison and a \$40,000 fine.

Most political observers believe that Hansen, were he the Republican nominee, could not beat Democratic Congressman Richard Stallings in the general election. By the same token, they believe that any other Republican candidate could win.

Both of these suppositions, of course, are open to question.

Hansen has proved a master at raising money, whether it be for his own campaign or other ventures. At the rally, he sought to avoid political questions, but he shook the hands of a lot of old friends. It indicates he is still a powerful force to be reckoned with.

Hansen said he is not concerned about the possibility of getting a late start in the race. He pointed out that when he first ran for Congress in 1964 he was considered only a poor third in a field of three, but he won the nomination and later the general election. He has always been a formidable campaigner.

Most of the other potential congressional candidates were on hand, and they appeared worried about what Hansen will do.

There is also a possibility that Hansen's wife could be a contender. However, women candidates in the 2nd Congressional District have never run well. She now works in an executive capacity with the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Among the most active candidates at the rally were State Sen. Dane Watkins, Idaho Falls, and State Reps. J.F. Chadband, Idaho Falls, and Gary Robbins of Dietrich. They passed out campaign literature and shook as many hands as they could, leaving little doubt they are firmly in the race, regardless of what Hansen does. Also on hand but less active were two other prospective contenders, State Sen. Ann Rydatch and radio station executive Mel Richardson, both of Idaho Falls.

Chadband said he had attended 24 fairs in the last 40 days. He estimated he would need to raise \$110,000 for the primary.

Robbins said he is campaigning full time. He said he has been active the last five weeks and has been successfully selling beans to finance his effort.

Richardson said he is hopeful of overcoming a Federal Communications Commission ruling that requires equal time be given to his opponents.

Mrs. Rydatch said she is waiting until this fall before determining whether she will run.

At this time it would appear that if Hansen were not a candidate, Watkins likely would hold an edge because of his ability to raise money, but it's a long time before the primary in May.