

1986 campaign expensive, starts early

By BEN J. PLASTINO

Post-Register columnist

Never in any other political campaign has the advance activity been so great as present activity for the 1986 general elections.

This includes the 1980 election when the senatorial race between Democrat Sen. Frank Church and Republican Steve Symms engendered high emotional interest.

Former Idaho Gov. Cecil D. Andrus, a probable gubernatorial candidate for next year, said recently, "It is an obscene amount of money we're going to spend."

He placed spending at between \$10 million and \$15 million, by far the most of any campaign.

He pointed out Symms will likely spend \$3 million; Symms' probable opponent, Democrat Gov. John V. Evans, \$2 million; Andrus and Lt. Gov. David H. Leroy, each \$1 million for the gubernatorial campaign; at least \$3 million by the overcrowded field for the 2nd Congressional District seat, and then additional amounts for the 1st Congressional District. Then the many legislative and county races should amount to a couple of million dollars more.

It would appear that campaign money will be spread thinly among the many candidates already announced or indicating they will jump into the race by late this year or early next.

One of the reasons for the early start is the half dozen potential aspi-

nants for the Republican nomination for the 2nd Congressional District. Each is trying to get an early start.

The only mistake they are making is picking on Democrat Congressman Richard Stallings, rather than attempting to show the differences among themselves. That's what the electors want to know now.

The Republican winner will have plenty of time to snipe at Stallings after the May primary next year, well in advance of the November general election. Already announced for the 2nd Congressional District are State Sen. Dane Watkins, businessman of Idaho Falls; Rep. Gary Robbins, Dietrich farmer, and Melvin Richardson, KID radio executive. Others who are in varying stages of entering are Dan Adamson, Jerome attorney, who barely lost in the 1984 primary; Rep. J. F. Chadband, Idaho Falls businessman; and State Sen. Ann Rydalch, also of Idaho Falls.

Then there is former congressman, George V. Hansen, who said there is a 50-50 chance of him entering, but that he won't make up his mind until later in the year.

No primary contest is expected in the governor's race. Leroy, who has announced, has already begun an aggressive campaign. He apparently will be unopposed for the nomination. Andrus said he likely will not announce until late this year.

Many of the 2nd District Congressional candidates apparently thought they could narrow the field of competitors by starting early, but that has

not come about.

Watkins, Robbins and Chadband has been especially active. Mrs. Rydalch and Hansen are making it clear they are possible contenders but they have actually not circulated campaign literature or raised campaign money so far.

If Hansen were to enter, however, it is probable that Adamson and maybe one or two others might withdraw. Watkins and Robbins have made it clear they are in the race to stay, Hansen or not.

The filing deadline for the general election is not until April 18 so there is still plenty of time for other entrants.

Hansen has some legal problems that could delay his entry if he has that in mind. His latest appeal of his felony conviction for filing false financial record was denied recently by an appeals court in Washington.

Andrus remarked "people's eardrums are already tired" over the campaign and he dreads to think what it will be next year.

"I think the people of the state of Idaho get tired and I know the candidates get tired as a result of campaigning for a year," Evans said. He plans to make his decision and announcement as late as he can, possibly late this year or even early next year.

Many of the candidates and observers say it will be hard for candidates to build and maintain fervor on a long campaign. Many Republican 2nd District congressional can-

didates have made the mistaken assumption that the primary election will be the main part of their race and that once past fellow Republicans, they will easily defeat Stallings. They will find that Stallings will be a formidable antagonist.

Watkins, for example, does not share that feeling. He said he has raised over \$25,000. He plans a war chest of \$150,000 for the primary campaign but \$250,000 for the general election.

Watkins does not believe Republican national committees will fork over as much as \$2 million to recapture the seat, a figure that Stallings gave in a recent interview. After all, the Idaho seat is only one of 435 in the U.S. House of Representative and it is hardly that important in the national picture.

For example, its importance is pale by comparison to Idaho's Senate seat. That one will figure in the national scale since it could determine party control of the U.S. Senate. Its importance is underscored by the fact that President Reagan came to Idaho Oct. 15 in behalf of Symms. It almost gave the impression the general election is this year, rather than next year. It helped swell Symms' war chest by \$150,000. This added to the \$700,000 or more he has raised, brings the amount to close to \$1 million already, and the campaign hasn't even started.

Idaho voters, already tired of political rhetoric, probably view the campaign next year with misgivings.