

In the election eye . . .

Conventions to mirror philosophical views

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It's now apparent that both the Democratic and Republican state conventions will graphically reflect contrasting philosophical views of the representatives of the Idaho congressional delegation on national issues.

This is apparent after talking with the two party chairmen, Democrat Wayne Fuller, Caldwell, and Republican Dennis M. Olsen, Idaho Falls. In many ways it is preparation for the bitter senatorial fight between Democrat Sen. Frank Church and Republican Steve Symms, and also the congressional battle between Democrat Diane Bilyeu and Republican George Hansen, in the 2nd district, and Democrat Glen Nichols and Republican Larry E. Craig in the 1st District.

On a secondary level will be state issues, as mirrored by activities which took place in the 1980 regular and special session of the Idaho Legislature.

Then there are other issues which are less partisan, such as abortion, Equal Rights Amendment and family relations.

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It appears the entire spectrum of public lands policies will reflect clearly differences between the two parties. This includes the so-called Sagebrush Rebellion, wilderness areas, Birds of Prey Wilderness and others along that line.

There is little question Idaho Democrats will endorse the Central Idaho Wilderness Area approved last week by Senate-House conferees. Church showed his political muscle by winning a complete victory on this legislation, against the wishes of the Republican members of the Idaho delegation.

Church was even able to go into the House and influence a subcommittee to defeat an amendment proposed by Rep. Steve Symms, which indicates the lack of power that Symms holds in the lower chamber. It is well he did, since the Symms proposal would have deleted 39,000 acres from the designation and removed protection for the rare Bighorn Sheep.

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Republicans Symms, Sen. James A. McClure and Rep. George V. Hansen are pretty much in agreement in opposition to the bill.

From a broad point of view, it is regrettable the Idaho congressional delegation can't agree on such pieces of legislation that are of such importance to the state. This likely will become one of the focal points of the senatorial and congressional contests in this state this fall.

Church believes the bill is good, contending it meets every one of the major objectives. He said it assures the opening of over 900,000 acres of non-wilderness land in Idaho for multiple-purpose development. This includes both mining and logging, thus assuring future timber supply and jobs for Idahoans.

McClure, Symms and Hansen, however, feel the 2.2 million acres contained in the bill locks up too much land that adversely

affects the Idaho economy.

The delegation members did agree, however, on the important provision that will permit development of cobalt in the West Panther Creek area. Under the compromise, 54,000 acres deleted from the wilderness area by the House was restored to wilderness status as provided by the Senate bill.

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The entire question on the size of the wilderness area is whether it strikes an even balance to protect wilderness and yet leave an adequate supply for lumbering and mining. This is the issue that likely will come under extensive debate during the coming campaign this fall.

Wrapped up in this entire issue is the size of the Birds of Prey and other wilderness and primitive area proposals. Church and the Democrats contend the most pristine areas should be protected.

McClure, Symms, Hansen and other Republicans argue too much has been locked up.

The decision may come in the ballot box in deciding the winner of the Church-Symms race but there are many other imponderables that have a bearing, such as human service, foreign affairs, and many others.

Many issues that will be defined by party platforms and resolutions are present on the state level. These include the matter of property taxation — specifically the Democrat's insistence that home property owners get relief, against the Republican philosophy favoring business and commercial interests.

Much of what took place in past legislative sessions likely will be mirrored in party platforms and resolutions, such as extending of Aid to Dependent Children, Medicaid and other human service programs; extension of highway funding; Office of Energy, biennial budget sessions; what changes, if any should be made on the primary election and state convention systems, and many others.

In most cases, party platforms and resolutions have had little impact with voter, except for some emotional ones, such as ERA and abortion. Most are forgotten a week after the conventions.

It could be different this year if the issues on a wide range of federal, state and local matters are clearly defined. If so, it would be a contrast with past years.