

The election eye...

Two party conventions to reflect contrasts

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The two state party conventions this month are expected to reflect contrasts between Republicans and Democrats in their platforms and resolutions.

The two state party chairmen, Republican Dennis M. Olson, Idaho Falls, and Wayne Fuller, Caldwell, both attorneys, say they likely will not know about the contents of resolutions or platforms until convention time.

Idaho Democrats open their conclave Thursday night with a banquet at the Hilton Inn at Pocatello, followed by business sessions Friday and Saturday. The Republicans will hold their gathering June 26-28 at the Red Lion, formerly the Rodeway, at Boise.

Both conventions, similar to those on the national scale, promise to be rather dull affairs because presidential nominees are nearly decided. The Republicans at their Detroit meeting need to select a running mate to Ronald Reagan. The Democrats in their national gathering at New York City Aug. 11-14 face the dying gasps of Senator Kennedy's efforts to unseat President Carter, but there will be no scrapping over the nominee to the vice presidential post.

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Idaho Republicans and Democrats face the delicate task of adopting platforms and resolutions which will appeal to the bulk of the voters and not veer to the extreme right or left. For the Republicans it's a question of not taking too strong a stance on the right; for the Democrats it's the same dilemma on the far left.

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Aside from extolling their party virtues, delegates may need to take positions on such emotional issues as the Equal Rights Amendment, abortions, right-to-work laws, funding for social service programs, Sagebrush Rebellion and other public land issues, Wilderness, property taxation, and others.

In past conventions, platforms and resolutions have been generally forgotten unless there was some emotional stance.

For example, Democrats during the Senator George McGovern's presidential campaign favored abortions. The Republicans some four years ago endorsed the Liberty Amendment.

Whether such stances affect the strength of party candidates, however, is doubtful.

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Democrats will have some 330 delegates at the Democratic stronghold at Pocatello. The way they will vote already has been decided as result of April's caucuses as eight votes for Carter, five for Kennedy and four uncommitted. About the only scrap will center on who gets the uncommitted delegates, but this is rather academic when Idaho's meager 17 votes are compared with nearly 1,000 at the national convention.

Republicans will have about 400 delegates, divided as 15 for Reagan, two for John Anderson, now turned independent, and four uncommitted. This indicates virtually all delegates are for Reagan but this also is hardly earth shattering when the 21 are compared with 1,600 at

the national bash.

In fact, both parties may have difficulty getting delegates to attend the national conventions, which lack interest.

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Wielding the big power will be Rep. Gary Gould, who will serve as chairman for both the resolutions and platform committees for the Democrats; Rep. Jack Kennewick, R-Boise, House assistant minority leader, chairman of the resolutions committee and Rich Hendricks, Preston, former Rep. George V. Hansen's administrative assistant, chairman of the platform committee, for the Republicans.

The philosophical textures of the two parties are reflected in their speaker programs. The Republican program includes House Majority Leader John Rhodes, of Arizona and two retired rightist generals who are extremely critical of Carter's foreign policies, Lt. Gen. Daniel Graham, and Gen. Singlaub. Graham was in Idaho Falls a few weeks ago under sponsorship of the Anybody but Church Committee to attack Church's record.

The Democrats have settled for a rather low key congressman, U.S. Rep. Pat Williams, of nearby Montana, a first termer.

Of course the Republicans will have their candidates, Reps. Steve Symms, Church's opponent, and Hansen, and State Sen. Larry Craig, Midvale, now the 1st District congressman nominee; Sen. James McClure, and Lt. Gov. Philip E. Batt speak. The Democrats counter with Church, Gov. John V. Evans and Glen Nichols, Boise, and Diane Bilyeu, Pocatello, the congressional nominees.* * *

Both conventions are expected to take strong stands on state issues and the Legislature. It is expected the Republicans will come stoutly to defense of the Republican controlled Legislature and against Democratic Governor Evans. The Democrats, conversely, are anticipated to bitterly condemn the Legislature and stolidly back the governor.

Many legislators are talking of juking the May presidential preferential and primary elections and perhaps some resolutions along this line may be considered. This also may affect procedures for picking convention delegates.

How the parties conduct their conventions likely will have considerable influence on whether there will be any changes in the primary and convention laws at the 1981 Legislature.