

Most election results followed predictions

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Another Idaho primary election has come and gone and there were few surprises on the Idaho, East Idaho and Bonneville level.

The overwhelming victories of President Carter and Republican Ronald Reagan were well anticipated, made even more so when George Bush withdrew and Senator Kennedy continued to lose in other states.

The decisive victory of U.S. Rep. George V. Hansen, R-Idaho, over his old antagonist, Jim Jones, Jerome attorney, was anticipated, although the size of the crossover vote of Democrats and independents to the Republican primary raised some doubt. As it developed, the switch was not that extensive and Hansen won 41,825-30,758, a margin of 11,067. This was slightly larger than the 8,490 of two years ago when the final count was 35,736-28,593.

It would indicate that Hansen is now well entrenched and unless something drastic should occur, he will not have much trouble disposing of Democrat Diane Bilyeu, Pocatello, in the November general elections.

Legislative and county races generally went along as expected but there were some surprises, especially in the ouster of Jefferson County Sheriff Joe Potter 2-1.

It's to young Garth Gunder-son's credit that he not only defeated two opponents but polled more votes than the other two combined, including the incumbent sheriff. He attributes this to intensive campaigning, plus widespread criticism that Potter had neglected his duties.

The only other mild surprise on the local level was the victory of Doug Holm, Roberts farmer, who with little campaigning defeated Tom Harrington, Rigby High School teacher, for the Democratic nomination for state representative in District 20 and the right to oppose Rep. Ray E. Infanger, R-Salmon, in the general election.

The legislative victories of Rep. Wayne E. Tibbitts, R-Lorenzo; Rich Orme, St. Anthony; and William L. Floyd, Idaho Falls realtor, had been forecast. Floyd eked out a narrow 192-vote edge victory.

Most of the predictions also were accurate in sheriff and county commissioner races, including incumbent County Commissioner Tom Loertscher's decisive triumph over Delmar Anderson for the

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Republican nomination in Bonneville County.

The forecast of 12,500 votes for Bonneville County was on the nose, with 12,545 casting ballots. This was 47 percent of the 31,291 registered, and well above the state average turnout. This speaks well for the Bonneville voters, who actually had few races to excite them.

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Last minute mild surprise was the write-in campaign by the Bonneville Republicans to fill vacancies against Democrat incumbents. Attorney John Bybee amassed an impressive 205 write-ins for the dubious privilege of challenging popular Democratic Prosecuting Attorney Jerry Woolf. Martin B. Trillhaase, an ultra-conservative and irrigation system engineer, got 51 write-in votes — one more than the required 50 — to qualify for a contest against Rep. Wendell Miller, D-Idaho Falls, whose strength has increased greatly as a champion of nuclear power in the last Legislature.

However, the effort mounted by the Bonneville County Republican Central Committee is commendable to give people a choice, even though Woolf and Miller likely aren't enthusiastic about the unexpected competition.

It is regrettable the Democrats don't follow a similar course, but leaders complain formidable prospective candidates are hard to enlist. They contend with some justification, the Democratic label is a handicap in such a strong Republican county.

Actually, there is a strong potential Democratic vote if it is cultivated, as shown by such Democrats such as Sen. Frank Church and Govs. Cecil D. Andrus and John V. Evans.

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Voters should also know that to compare the size of the Republican and Democratic vote is misleading for the general election. The Republicans had more interesting races to offer and many Democrats and independents voted on the Republican ballot.

For example, the fact that Symms garnered far more votes than Senator Church may lead many to believe that he holds a

commanding position. Nothing could be farther from the truth, and Symms and others with political knowledge know this. A case in point was in 1968, when Hansen decided to oppose Church. In the Republican primary, Hansen got about 75,000 votes while Church received about 50,000 on the Democratic ballot. Both were unopposed in the primary, such as were Church and Symms. Many thought this gave Hansen the edge, but in the general election, Church won a 60 percent victory over Hansen for one of his largest margins for re-election.

With vacation season now at hand, voters and candidates can take a breather for the pleasant summer days ahead, then gird for general election battles in September.