

Iran seen key issue in Hansen-Jones race

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The key issue in the Republican primary race May 27 between U.S. Rep. George V. Hansen and Jim Jones will not be such prosaic topics as farm prices, land use, range management, wilderness, and federal projects.

Those who vote in this race may be swayed by the Iranian controversy where Hansen and Jones have taken diametrically opposite stances.

Hansen has taken two trips to Tehran in self-proclaimed missions to gain release of the American hostages while Jones contends such views and actions of Hansen give comfort to the enemy.

Hansen has even gone so far as to call for an investigation into the shah's manipulations of the United States for the years he was the ruler, a move that Jones strongly condemns as one that would be putting this nation on trial to the world.

Jones attacks Hansen for what he says are his opponent's penchant for stirring up emotional issues, such as Iran, OSHA, IRS, Panama Canal, Nicaragua, the entire Caribbean, Red China and others of that type. Jones contends that Hansen should concern himself with issues of vital concern to Idaho, such as inflation, the economy, public lands, wilderness, farm policies and prices, national defense, energy and others more fitting for a congressman.

So far, Hansen has chosen to ignore Jones, waging a campaign as if he had no opposition. This could be a dangerous attitude, as Ronald Reagan found out in Iowa.

Two years ago, Hansen also deigned not to reply to any Jones' charges. Jones only campaigned for two months but yet got about 44 percent of the vote, losing by about 9,000. That's a rather close result for one who wasn't even known and indicates there was a heavy vote against Hansen. Hansen contended because of a lack of races in the Democratic primary, many Democrats and moderates switched to the Republican primary and voted against him. This observation likely is accurate but the same situation exists this year, only even more so. That's because it is a presidential primary which will coax out more voters who have no strong party ties. These may be inclined to vote against Hansen.

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Hansen contends his trips to Iran came at a time when no one else was able to enter the country. His first trip earned him much sympathy and support, at least for a time, but the political value of his second trip was something less than spectacular. Hansen, at least, must be admired for his courage and imagination for taking such junkets at what he says was cost from his own pocket of about \$5,000.

However, as relations with Iran worsen it could mean the sentiment against Hansen may increase proportionately on grounds he is appeasing an enemy of this nation. Jones could benefit from such a trend.

Aside from these Iranian factors, Hansen would appear the strong favorite for re-election. Jones is a somewhat low key campaigner, not coming on strong, but in Idaho this could be an asset. He is extremely well versed, intelligent, and an indefatigable worker. To underrate him may be a crucial mistake.

Hansen is a political animal who flashes spectacularly across Idaho's political horizon. Everything he does, he does with a flourish. Along with his fellow Idaho congressman, Steve Symms, he is with a small group of less than a dozen who are considered on the extreme right.

Jones and Hansen have not tangled in any face-to-face debate. Jones says he has challenged Hansen but Hansen said

he has received no direct invitation and furthermore his schedule is tight. Hopefully the two can get together for a confrontation.

Much like U.S. Sen. Church, most people have strong feelings for or against Hansen. There appears to be no middle ground.

Also like Church, Hansen has about 40 percent of the voters warmly in his corner and 40 percent who will vote against him under any circumstance. That leaves a bloc of some 20 percent who can decide the issue. The next four weeks can decide which way they will go.



Post-Register/Robert Bower

The contenders

U.S. Rep. George V. Hansen, top, and Jim Jones, bottom, are hooked up in the feature primary race May 27. The two are shown as they appeared recently in Idaho Falls to announce their campaign goals.