

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.

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The political pulse

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B-9

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.

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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.



The contenders

Post-Register/Robert Bower

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