

Candidates stand in line for '86 races

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Although the 1986 political campaign is more than a year away, potential candidates already are standing in the wings, trying to decide whether they will enter the races.

Of a score of aspirants mentioned for various federal and state offices, there are four from eastern Idaho.

The leading one is 2nd District Rep. Richard Stallings, a Democrat. He has left little doubt that he will seek re-election after his narrow victory last year over former Republican congressman George Hansen.

"I feel I am following the views of my constituents," said Stallings.

He says his votes for farm relief legislation and a vote against MX missiles were in the right direction. He was on the losing side in both cases.

Stallings was in eastern Idaho most of this week firming his support with a series of meetings with farmers. He also was keynote speaker at the Bonneville County Democrats' annual Truman Birthday Banquet.

A trio of Idaho Falls Republican legislators admit they are interested in the 1986 races. They include Sen. Dane Watkins, for 2nd District congressman and Sen. Ann Rydalch and Rep. Linden Bateman, who each say they are interested in running for lieutenant governor, and also for the congressional post.

Most candidates for U.S. senator



Richard Stallings

and representative are expected to disclose their intentions by no later than early this fall so that they can have at least a year to plan for an intensive campaign. Those seeking state offices possibly can wait a little longer, or until before the Legislature convenes in January.

In view of what looks like a large field, it is possible many will announce their intentions this spring or summer.

After talking with the potential eastern Idaho candidates it is this writer's opinion that Stallings will seek re-election, but the trio of legislators actually will not enter. To jump into a grueling contest the candidates must have a strong determination and prospects of an ample war chest. This does not appear the case for Watkins, Mrs. Rydalch and Bateman.

Perhaps the most serious is Watkins, who has long cherished a desire to step into the halls of Congress.

Watkins says his chances now for running are "50-50" which would indicate he has little more than passing interest.

"I'm serious enough so that I have formed an exploratory committee the last two months," said Watkins. "I have done nothing formally but I call this group my kitchen cabinet. I don't care to disclose their names at this time."

Watkins said he has two main aims:

- To find people who support him and will work for him.
- To find people who will raise money and contribute to his fund.

"I don't know how much I will need to raise because it will depend on how much will be needed for the primary election, as well as the general election," said Watkins.

He said it will take at least \$150,000 and possibly more. He said he must first select a campaign treasurer.

Watkins has served seven two-year terms in the Idaho Senate and is now in his eighth term. He is chairman of the Senate Local Government and Taxation Committee and a ranking member of the Joint Finance-Appropriation Committee.

"This is a conservative district," he said, "and I have been voting to hold down taxes. I believe I have represented my constituents."

He said he sponsored three federal-oriented resolutions which passed the Legislature. They include calling for a balanced federal budget, right to bear arms and to prevent the Occupational Safety and Health Agency from unnecessarily encroaching on private industry.

Bateman, the House majority caucus chairman, acknowledged he is considering both the congressional and lieutenant governor contests, but says it is too early to make a definite decision.

He is serving his fifth two-year term and is in leadership for his third session.

Bateman said he found the past session "as the most difficult since I have been in the Legislature. It has been discouraging as I have needed to split with House Speaker Tom Stivers to support higher funding for education."

However, Bateman, a Bonneville High School history teacher, has been given high marks for his past performance in backing higher public school appropriation and for state control of morals issue. This has included raising the drinking age to 21 and for the Indoor Clear Air Act, and vigorously opposing lottery.

Mrs. Rydalch said two different groups have approached her about entering the congressional and lieutenant governor races.

"However," she said, "I enjoy my state senator position."

She added she is assessing the other two positions, but that she wouldn't make up her mind until fall.

She is serving her second term and in private life is senior subcontractor administrator with EG&G, an INEL operating contractor.

Others mentioned for the 2nd District congressional races are Republicans Hansen; his wife, Connie; Dan Adamson, Jerome attorney, who lost in the 1984 primary to Hansen; Attorney General Jim Jones, who indicates he will announce his intentions no later than May; and Assistant Majority Leader Robert Geddes, Preston.

There are no less than a dozen considering the lieutenant governorship. Why this part-time job of only \$14,000 a year is of such interest is mystifying, but possibly many believe it may be a stepping stone to the governorship.

Besides Bateman and Mrs. Rydalch, others mentioned include Republicans Sen. Skip Smyser, Parma; Church Lempesis, Post Falls attorney; Reps. Steve Antone, Rupert, and Kitty Gurnsey, Boise; and Democrats State Treasurer Marjorie Ruth Moon; State Sens. John Peavey, Carey, and Vernon Lannen, Pinehurst; and Reps. Larry Echohawk and Patricia McDermott, both of Pocatello; former State Sen. Terry Reilly, Nampa; Payette Mayor Dick Butcher, and Larry LaRocco, Boise, who ran unsuccessfully for 1st District congressman in 1982.