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The political pulse

The election eye

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Idaho voting trend difficult to analyze

By BEN J. PLASTINO
Post-register political editor

Nearly every candidate who trods the eastern Idaho turf in search of votes is frank to admit it is difficult to determine how the political winds are blowing.

This writer has seldom found a candidate who didn't think he was going to win even when all signs were against him but this year it appears to be tougher than usual to predict winners except in a few cases.

It would appear then that most state and political races could be close and it would not be surprising to see some strong favorites wiped out or given a bad scare in the Nov. 2 general election.

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In 1980, the political signs were apparent for a tremendous Republican conservative tide but that is not the case this year.

Party label this time may have little bearing on races, which is good news for Democrats who have experienced lean years in recent elections, and particularly so in 1980.

Despite this assessment it is a good bet to string along with the incumbents as the probable victors but occasionally one is knocked off, such as Democrat U.S. Sen. Frank Church two years ago. This year, many confident incumbents may find the road to victory rockier than usual, and this can apply to those on the congressional, state, legislative and county levels.

The electorate this year appears in no mood to heed political rhetoric and how they will vote on election day pose a riddle. The guidelines of the past could very well not apply this year.

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Both of Idaho's headline races could be fairly close. They include the gubernatorial hassle between Democrat Gov. John V. Evans and Republican Lt. Gov. Philip E. Batt and the 2nd District congressional struggle between Republican U.S. Rep. George Hansen and Democrat Richard Stallings.

Most are inclined to give edges to the incumbents but these are two races where it is not beyond reason to believe one or both incumbents could be ousted.

The longtime veteran incumbents, Treasurer Marjorie Ruth Moon and Auditor Joe Williams must be given decided advantages against their respective Republican challengers, Doyle Miner, and Nolan G. Young, both of Boise.

The two other state contests also have faint signs for upsets. Republican Attorney General David H. Leroy is generally viewed as a top-heavy choice over Democrat State Sen. Mike Mitchell, Lewiston, for lieutenant governor while Republican Jim Jones, Burley, is placed a thin favorite over Democrat J. D. Williams, Preston, for attorney general.

Many of the longtime legislators and county officers who appear to worry little about re-election against what they consider little more than token opposition may be in for a rude awakening election day. There are no such things as safe races, particularly in these politically turbulent times.