

The Post-Register

The political pulse

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The election eye

State finance method escalates as issue

By BEN J. PLASTINO
Post-Register political editor

Republicans and Democrats opened their Bonneville campaign headquarters Wednesday and already the method of financing state government has escalated into a major political issue.

It gave both Democrat Gov. John V. Evans and his Republican challenger, Lt. Gov. Philip E. Batt, opportunities to expound their views before partisan supporters, along with other leading state and local candidates.

In the background, the two lieutenant governor nominees, Democrat Mike Mitchell and Republican David H. Leroy came to the defense of their gubernatorial standard bearers.

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Batt and Leroy uncovered three issues, which Evans and Mitchell refuted, bringing further confusion to the complex campaign, and raising questions as to their veracity.

Batt charged Evans waited too long in taking cost-saving measures, even recommending calling a special session of the Idaho Legislature this summer, in view of the declining economy, and stands behind television ads claiming the state has a deficit.

Leroy advocates a return to the state government of an accrual-basis budget.

Both Evans and Mitchell contended it is better to wait until the newly elected legislators can act after they take office in December when the financial picture will be clearer. They point out the Republican legislative leadership

opposes any tax increase and a special session would have accomplished nothing.

Evans also added that to withhold the \$19.5 million on public school funding at this time would trigger an automatic property tax increase. In view of early signs for an upturn in the economy he thinks it may not be necessary.

Evans branded as "malarkey" Batt's charges of a deficit, insisting he is following the Idaho Constitution in balancing the budget or otherwise Leroy would have filed a suit. He said Batt knows the charges are false and added "he won't go to heaven if he says these things." Batt avers the deficit exists through accounting manipulations.

Evans also rejected Leroy's accrual-basis recommendation, saying the state had departed from this system in favor of a more efficiently operated government.

Leroy vowed he would sponsor a bill to require an annual balanced budget by state government, complaining the state moved debts and costs, including taxpayer refund charges, which were incurred in 1982, over for payment after June 30, into fiscal year 1982. Conversely, it accelerated certain income and receipts that normally would have been recognized in 1983, forward into June of 1982 fiscal year budget for balancing purposes.

Leroy certainly has some significant points but here again it is a question of differing accounting policies.

Jones
Sun. Sept 19, 1982
denies
high cost

BY BEN J. PLASTINO
Post-Register political editor

Jim Jones, Jerome, Republican attorney general candidate, said here Friday he only plans to spend about \$60,000 in his campaign and scoffed at claims of his Democratic opponent, J. D. Williams, he would spend \$200,000.

"I don't think this is a campaign issue," said Jones in a Post-Register interview.

"His silly statement that I'm spending \$200,000 on the electronic media is absolute hogwash. He claims he heard this in a rumor but I'm convinced that he manufactured the rumor himself."

Jones said he is of the mind that a candidate should have some issues and present a positive program.

"If he can't find any issues I'll be glad to meet with him and suggest some," he said.

Jones said an attorney general candidate "should deal in facts as the office is very powerful and sensitive."

He then observed that when Williams headed the so-called "park and narc" squad as deputy attorney general against drug pushers that the Pocatello City council in 1972 passed a resolution criticizing the operators for bringing unjustified charges.

Jones said the real issues are to get drunk drivers off the street with a program for tougher treatment for those convicted of drunk driving, as well as mandatory treatment for those who have drinking problems.

He also said there should be tougher penalties for drug pushers.

He said if elected he would keep abreast of laws in which there were challenges over state control of water, whether in Idaho or elsewhere.

He pointed out his election is important as he could be the swing vote on the State Land Board which oversees state lands.

He also said he plans to use the attorney general's office to combat con men, bunko artists and fly-by-night salesmen.

Jones said "consumer fraud is increasing in Idaho and something has to be done about it."

"I don't believe the attorney general should act as a referee between the legitimate businessman and his customer," he said. "This is something which can be handled by private attorneys or in small claims court."