

# The Post-Register

## The political pulse

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The election eye...

# Stallings may spring upset against Hansen

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It's still a long time until November but there are some significant signs that Republican U.S. Rep. George V. Hansen had not better take the challenge of Democrat Richard H. Stallings, Ricks College history professor, too lightly.

Stallings, 41, is articulate, knowledgeable, and is a fresh face on the Idaho political horizon which at present is dominated by veterans who in many cases are beginning to wear thin.

Another Democrat who has entered the race is George Anthony, who gives his address as Buhl and is engaged in the data processing system business. However, he apparently has little campaign organization and in his campaign statement took aim against nuclear buildup, even to the point of questioning whether the proposed Replacement Production Reactor should be built in Idaho. This is hardly a way to make him popular in the key nuclear community of east Idaho.

Hansen has weathered many storms. The one in 1976 when he barely nosed out Democrat Stan Kress, then Firth school superintendent, by only 1,976 votes of about 167,000 cast in one of the bitterest political campaigns in Idaho election history, particularly stands out.

It was a campaign which was highlighted by acid rhetorics stemming from Hansen's prison parole on charges of sloppy campaign financing report, delayed IRS filing, and other emotional issues relating to OSHA and IRS tactics.

Hansen apparently was vindicated because in a rematch in 1978 he won handily over Kress.

**Hansen won decisively in the 1980 elections against Diane Bilyeu, Pocatello realtor, but there are certain factors in that race that should be examined in the light of what could happen this year.**

The official canvass shows that Hansen beat Mrs. Bilyeu by 34,832, or 11,96 to 81,364. That's a 58 percent margin and any majority over 55 is considered at least comfortable, if not decisive.

Mrs. Bilyeu won only three counties, Ada, Bannock and Blaine, of the 26 in the 2nd Congressional District but did run fairly close in several others. Hansen's biggest pluralities were amassed in the Upper Snake River counties of Bingham, Bonneville, Jefferson, Madison and Fremont, gleaning about a 20,000



**Richard H. Stallings**

Stallings has a number of advantages over Mrs. Bilyeu which would indicate a close congressional race. His home base is in the Upper Snake River Valley, he is a Mormon and he won't face the strong Reagan-Republican tide of 1980.

Mrs. Bilyeu spent only about \$30,000 compared to more than five times that amount by Hansen. Stallings won't do much better, saying he hopes for at least \$50,000 but plans to make it up with intensive personal campaigning, something which Mrs. Bilyeu did not do.

Past election records show there are automatically 40 percent of the voters against Hansen, regardless of his competition. This indicates the opponent needs only swing about 10 percent. Stallings touched on this very point in his formal campaign announcement two weeks ago when he acknowledged he must win the crucial independent votes for victory.

This situation also continually faced Sen. Frank Church. Thus, when a formidable opponent in Steve Symms, combined with the right wing and Reagan-Republican tide dominated the 1980 election, he was beaten.

**Another important factor is the shifting of 21,500 people in Ada County from the 1st to the 2nd Congressional District. These are generally Democratic and could favor Stallings 2-1 or more. In 1980, Mrs. Bilyeu won the western and northern portion of Ada 10,234 to 7,112. The 21,500 addition translates to about 10,000 more voters who likely will heavily favor Stallings.**

Hansen, however, has different ideas. He acknowledges he has largely ignored Ada County in the past but this year plans to mount a much more intensive campaign. There are now 40,000 people from Ada County in the 2nd district, not far behind the 65,000 each in Bonneville and Bannock and 53,000 in Twin Falls. It has generally been an axiom a 2nd District congressional candidate must win two of the three big counties for election. Now there are four.

Nevada U.S. Sen. Paul Laxalt, a strong disciple of President Reagan, recently stated that the Republicans could lose as many as 40 House seats in the 1982 elections if the economy continues to slump. The Idaho seat could conceivably be one of them.

Another factor that also favors Stallings is the tendency of Idahoans to elect representatives of both parties on the congressional delegation. This has been the case from statehood until 1980 when Steve Symms ousted Church and made it an all-Republican delegation. This deprived the Democrats with about 40 percent of the population of direct representation.

**These are some of the imponderables that must be weighed in the coming campaign but that indicate that contrary to what most believe Hansen does not have a free ride to the U.S. Capitol.**