

# The Post-Register

## The political pulse

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### *The election eye*

# Records show Idaho voter interest high

By **BEN J. PLASTINO**  
**Post-Register political editor**

Although there is constant lament that voter apathy is high, the records show this is not exactly the case. In fact, it would appear that over the years, Idahoans have shown an increasing interest in the political process, but there is certainly room for improvement.

Idaho has been in the top rankings on percentage voter turnout and on some occasions has ranked as high as second.

In any event, Idaho voting has been well above the national average in every election. Idahoans take their politics seriously, even though they are frequently heard to make scathing comments about politics in general and politicians in particular.

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Cries of anguish were expressed at what appeared lack of interest in the Nov. 2 general election but the voting rate was considerably better than anticipated. Ben Ysursa, deputy secretary of state in charge of elections, predicted the turnout would not reach above 55 percent, which would be a new low.

The 1982 general election canvass showed the vote turnout was slightly better than expected and well above the state office elections of four years ago. It showed 332,237 cast ballots, or 61.39 percent of the 541,164 registered.

This exceeded the turnout in 1978 when state elective officers were elected. At that time only 289,748 cast ballots, or 55.06 percent of the 526,253 registered.

Both figures were well below the alltime record in the 1980 presidential election when 446,045, or 76.77 percent, voted of the 581,066 registered. At that time, there was no election for state offices but there was for presidential,

senatorial and congressional positions which traditionally attract more voters.

In 1976, also a presidential year, 354,556 cast ballots, or 68.22 percent of the 520,384 registered.

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**Idaho is an interesting political state and generally is considered one of the most conservative in the nation.**

Its congressional delegation at present is all Republican, Sens. James A. McClure and Steve Symms and Reps. Hansen and Craig.

In rankings on their voting record by various organizations, they are generally at the top in conservative voting, particularly Hansen and Symms, with Craig and McClure not far behind.

Despite this, Idaho has elected a Democratic governor 12 years and the Evans re-election will extend this to 16. With former, popular governor Cecil D. Andrus expressing interest in returning to the governor's chair in 1986, the Democratic grip at the key slot in the Statehouse could continue even longer.

This is most remarkable considering the Republicans overwhelmingly control the Legislature, at present 21-14 in the Senate and 51-19 in the House. This is a Democratic gain of two in the Senate and five in the House from the past biennium.

**Idahoans and most Americans like to think of themselves as conservatives and they may be in philosophy but they are actually liberals in practice. If you don't believe it, just witness how they clamor for government services for their personal benefits, such as Social Security, good highways, sewer, water, parks, recreation, education, health, welfare, and many, many others, despite their howls to cut government spending and taxes.**