The election eye . .

Most incumbents will run again, few challengers loom

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The 1980 election on legislative and county levels indicates most incumbents plan to seek re-election and there are few challengers appearing on the horizon at this time.

All 18 legislators from the 10 East Idaho counties expect to seek re-election but only a few seem to face opposition.

Most of the challengers who vied against the office holders two years ago were soundly thrashed and they say they are discouraged from making another attempt this year.

One who barely was defeated, Frank Murdock, Idaho Falls accountant, said he does not plan to run this year after two close races with Sen. Richard A. Egbert, D-Tetonia. He lost by only 300 votes four years ago and a slim 64 votes in 1978.

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The first to announce last week was Don Penfold, Teton rancher, Republican, who will oppose Egbert.

Other possible challengers all Democrats, are Dick May Ashton High School teacher an former farmer, to challeng Rep. Doyle C. Miner, R-St Anthony; Tom Harrington Rigby High School teacher, t vie against Rep. Ray E. In fanger, R-Salmon; and Wayne Olaveson, Midway Junior High School teacher, against Rep. Wayne E. Tibbitts, R-Lorenzo.

Alex Creek, prominent Idaho Falls civic leader and a former city councilman, said he is considering opposing Rep. Gary Paxman, R-Idaho Falls. Paxman's negative voting record with the ultra conservative bloc has come under sharp criticism.

Former House Speaker Allen F. Larsen, Blackfoot, who won the Republican gubernatorial nomination but lost the general election last year, was rumored as a possible opponent to Sen. Israel Merrill, D-Blackfoot, earlier but now indicates he likely won't run. He also discounted reports he would oppose Rep. Raymond Parks, R-Blackfoot, who succeeded him.

Tim Hopkins, Idaho Falls attorney, also said he does not plan a Republican primary rematch with Rep. Gary L. Paxman, R-Idaho Falls. Paxman won a tight contest in 1978.

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On the Bonneville County level, Bonneville County Prosecuting Attorney Jerry Woolf, Democrat, now plans to seek re-election after first indicating he may not run again. Woolf said another two-year term is about all he wants.

The position now has become fairly lucrative as it pays $24,000 for the county position, plus $18,000 as city attorney, a total of $42,000. The Bonneville County commissioners have indicated willingness to spend $15,000 for a fulltime county deputy attorney to handle the increasing load.

If by any chance he doesn't seek re-election, there are a half dozen young attorneys who would jump into the race, and one or more may still do so.

Also planning to seek re-election are Clyde A. Burtenshaw, Democrat, and Tom Loertscher, Republican, as county commissioners; Republican Sheriff Blaine Skinner and Republican Coroner Vernal Rydalch.

Republican County Clerk Ron Longmore, who was appointed last year to replace DelRoy C. Bodily, who died from a brain tumor, also plans to file for the position.

The sheriff's race may turn out to be the feature on the county level as the popular Richard Ackerman, a veteran police detective sergeant and recently elected Elks exalted ruler, plans to oppose Skinner.

Skinner appears to have some internal strife as result of the authoritative way he supervises his huge staff of 41 deputies and is accused by fellow officers of aloofness and non cooperation.

Karen Norell, a department store employee who has had some coroner training and who ran four years ago, said she now has decided not to oppose Rydalch for the coroner's job.

In other counties, it's the same story with most incumbents to file and few challengers. One exception is in Madison County where long-time Sheriff Ford Smith, Democrat, plans to retire, and his chief deputy, Lion Koon plans to run in his place.

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The legislators earn about $7,500 a year, including $4,000 in salaries and the remainder in expenses; sheriff $18,250, clerk $17,250 and the parttime coroner $2,270.

Oddly enough, the prosecuting attorney and coroner serve for only two-year terms, and the others four years. The county commissioners serve staggered terms of two years and four years and there is always one elected for four years. County Commissioner A. Wylie Snarr, Republican, is a holdover for two years more while Loertscher will vie for the four-year term.

By a quirk in state law, these are the only county officers elected this year. The others are the following two years.

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The filing period is only for seven days, April 1-7, inclusive.

If no one files for an office, the state central committee can fill vacancies up to April 24, and the legislative and county central committee can name nominees up to April 22.

Those appointed can qualify by filing declaration of candidacy, paying the filing fee and filing petitions containing at least 50 qualified electors for state office and at least 10 for county offices. The state candidates must do this by May 1, the county candidates by April 29.

With the close of the legislature, announcements are expected to be forthcoming the coming week.

Most of all, party officials and prospective candidates should remember there can be no vacancies filled after April 22, except for those created by death or withdrawals by a nominee.

A number who are not mentioned in pre-election talk likely will jump in but the time is short.

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