

Democrats retain firm dominance of Legislatures

By BEN J. PLASTINO

Post-Register political editor

Although Republicans have made significant gains in the presidency and Congress, they have not done well on the state level.

After making sensational presidential, congressional and gubernatorial inroads in the 1980 general elections, Republicans lost ground in 1982.

All political pollsters indicate the trend may continue in 1984 with Democratic surges in Congress, governorships, Legislatures and perhaps even the presidency.

It's on the state level where Democrats hold a dominant foothold with the Democrats in control in both houses of the Legislature in 35 states and Republicans hold a majority in only 10 states. Neither party controls both houses in four states and Nebraska has a single non-partisan unicameral Legislature.

Democrats scored gubernatorial gains of six last year and now lead in the nation 34-16.

Idaho is one of the 10 states where Republicans hold legislative control, with a lopsided margin of 51-19 in the House and 21-14 in the Senate.

Despite this strong Republican grasp in Idaho, Democrats have

Politics

The Post-Register, Idaho Falls, Idaho, August 3, 1983

C-7

controlled the key governorship since 1971, or 13 years and will have done so for 16 years after Gov. John V. Evans serves out the remaining three years of his current term.

On the other hand, Republicans have controlled the Senate 20 years and the House 24 years. It has been since 1959 that Democrats held majorities in both the House and Senate.

Prospects for the 1984 general elections at present are purely conjectures but the governorship is not up for grabs until 1986.

How the political fortunes fall next year is too early to tell now, much depending on whether Reagan will seek a second term as appears probable and the political trends on both the domestic and foreign front.

The terms of all of the 105 legislatures expire next year but the present reapportionment suit now in the courts raises a huge question

mark. The number of new legislators to be elected will depend on any new reapportionment proposal that may be approved by either the courts or Legislature. After arguments in state courts, it is conceivable the entire matter may be bounced to the U.S. Supreme Court for final determination. This could take many months.

Attorney General Jim Jones said appeals and other pending court action will almost certainly block any plans for a new legislative elections this fall, regardless of what First District Judge Dar Cogwell wants. In fact, it may be a close call to settle the legislative reapportionment question before the next May primary elections.

Regardless of what happens in reapportionment, it would appear the Republicans will still control the House in view of their present topheavy lead but the margin may be narrowed. The Senate could be close although the Republicans must be given a thin edge.