

McClure can expect easy race

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Sen. James A. McClure, R-Idaho, may get a free ride into the U.S. Senate next year, facing nothing more than token Democratic opposition unless a formidable dark horse should unexpectedly enter.

After former U.S. Secretary of Interior Cecil D. Andrus formally announced May 12 he would not enter the contest, several Democrats were mentioned as possible contenders.

A Post-Register survey Monday indicated there are three possibly strong contenders viewing the race with some interest. Each said chances they'll run are 50-50. Further questioning indicates all lack the burning desire for office that must accompany such a contest.

The three are State Treasurer Marjorie Ruth Moon; former state Sen. Mike P. Mitchell, Lewiston, who was a candidate for lieutenant governor in 1982; and state Sen. John Peavey, Carey.

Andrus mentioned these names, along with others, when he announced he would not be a candidate, a development this writer had anticipated.

All three say McClure is particularly vulnerable because of his penchant for selling public lands to vested interests at the expense of the public; his strong ties with U.S. Energy Secretary Donald Hodel, who is linked with the ill-fated Washington Public Power Supply System; his growing aloofness to the Idaho's interests, leaning more toward national affairs as a Senate leader; accusations he is a Republican rubberstamp for growing budget deficits; and fear he will allow natural gas deregulation, which would bring spiraling prices to Idaho households.

Potential candidates agreed they must decide by late summer, and no later than September, whether they will run.

Peavey, a former Republican who has served 10 years in the Senate, where he is now Minority Caucus chairman, said he is giving the race some thought.

"Right now I haven't decided one way or another," he said. "I'll probably make up my mind within 60 days after I have talked to other prospective candidates and Democratic leaders," he said.

Peavey said he thinks McClure is losing touch with Idahoans, and that he doesn't think the nuclear business is paying its fair share.

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"McClure is backing the Reagan deficit budget, where taxes for the middle class are going up and those for major corporations are going down. The Reagan deficit of nearly a trillion dollars is more than those of all of the previous presidents put together.

"I believe the people of Idaho, and this includes people of Idaho Falls, should take a look at Hodel, who has McClure's warm backing, and his activities as former BPA administrator in the WPPSS financial failures. This is causing millions of dollars of loses to Idaho electrical consumers and benefits the big eastern bankers."

Mitchell

Mitchell said he may be leaning against the race but is still a potential candidate.

"Right now the chances are against my running but I haven't closed the door," he said, adding he is more interested in helping Democratic legislative candidates win control of the Legislature in 1984 in view of what happened in last year's elections.

He said excellent candidates such as John Combo, Anne Voillette and Bill Storer in Idaho Falls all lost, mostly for partisan reasons. He said the trend could be reversed this year.

"These people did not receive any help from the Idaho Democratic Party," he said. "I hope they will next year, especially after what we saw the Republicans do to education."

"The Democrats had lots of good candidates but they lost because their opponents were riding the Republican elephant. We see something like Combo, who would be a credit to the Legislature when compared with Watkins' (Sen. Dane Watkins, R-Idaho Falls) miserable record."

Mitchell said Democrat Terry Reilly lost in 1980 to Republican Leon Swenson, "considered the conscience of the Republican Party" in 1978. But Reilly defeated Swenson in 1980.

"I think many Democrat candidates can do this next year," he said.

"I know what it is to conduct a statewide race and I believe I can help the Democrats."

"However, don't bet your house that I will personally be running."

Miss Moon

Miss Moon, who has served 21 years, said she could run without giving up her state treasurer's post next year.

"I never thought of running and it came all of a sudden when Mr. Andrus mentioned my name. It is something I will look to. I would make up my mind not later than September."

"I think Sen. McClure is highly vulnerable on his public land sales, and a rubber stamp for a deficit federal budget."

Miss Moon said she would be more interested in running for governor in 1986 when Gov. John V. Evans term expires. Evans has announced he will not seek re-election.

Andrus also has indicated keen interest in becoming the state's chief executive again. He served as governor six years before resigning in 1976 to become secretary of interior under President Jimmy Carter.