

The election eye . . .

Voters should beware of rankings and polls

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The season has arrived when polls and rankings of political candidates will be freely distributed to the press to sway voters.

Most Idaho voters are usually intelligent enough to consider these polls as another form of propaganda, and well they should in view of past elections.

Perhaps the most misleading are the rankings which are usually disseminated by vested interests or political action groups and are intended to boost or discredit those running or serving in office.

Other popular games are the polls which are often given months ahead of an election and really mean very little. They may serve as a form of entertainment, and the leaders should view them in that light.

It's an especially popular method by political action committees, conservative factions and other extreme groups to rate an office holder's record on how he voted on certain bills. These bills, of course, are those backed by certain groups and are self serving. In other words if a candidate voted for or against bills favored or opposed by certain groups, then he gets a 100 percent ranking. If he didn't, he gets zero.

For example, not too long ago the National Taxpayers Union disseminated a poll which ranked senators and a congressman on how they voted on spending issue.

The NTU scoring system was based on giving 100 percent for any congressmen who voted against every appropriation bill, and zero for those who did.

That may sound like a good idea to most taxpayers but if all of the 535 senators and congressmen voted against every appropriation bill and earned 100, it would have meant no government, no pensions, no school funds, and no financial help for the sick, elderly, poor or handicapped.

In Idaho, conservative groups generally rate Sen. James A. McClure and Reps. George V. Hansen and Steve Symms near the top and Sen. Frank Church near the bottom. Conversely, the more moderate factions reverse these ratings.

Actually, it would be better if Idaho's congressional delegation scored near the midway point, which would reflect they are not extremists — to the right or left. Often, Church and McClure do fall in this category, but Hansen and Symms are always on the extreme right in such ratings.

It must be added, however, that professional independent polls conducted just before an election have shown phenomenal accuracy.

It's noticeable that congressmen who trumpet their actions against big government spending are nevertheless among the first to triumphantly release announcements of federal grants and appropriations that go to Idaho government's entities, even though they had little to do with them.

Just last week, Hansen and Symms issued joint news releases protesting the reduction of federal government allocations to schools which have large numbers of government workers, such as in Idaho Falls. Yet, these two are in the

forefront to rant on federal spending, whatever its merits.

Even Church can't satisfy his liberal friends and the National Political Action Committee recently released an attack against him for taking actions the liberals opposed.

In Idaho, the legislators come under a number of ratings from various pressure groups. These include the Idaho Education Association, the Idaho Association of Commerce and Industry, Idaho Public Employees Association, labor unions and others.

These ratings are intended to influence the legislators and their supporters to serve their own particular interest, not that of the people.

The newspapers are often accused of bias, distortions and seeking to sensationalize the news, but most newspapers are the ones who attempt to defend the interests of the public at large. It is the newspapers who expose some of the shenanigans that take place in the Legislature and Congress which are slanted for the special interest.