The election eye . . .

Jones seeks broader campaign issue base

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The formal announcement Tuesday by Jim Jones, young Jerome attorney, for the 2nd Congressional District seat, indicates he will base his campaign on the broader spectrum that the incumbent is generally ineffective, not just because of his controversial Iranian trip.

Jones's announcement during an aerial barnstorming tour in Idaho Falls, Pocatello, Twin Falls and Boise, was hardly a surprise. He charged that Republican U.S. Rep. George V. Hansen's ill-advised Iranian trip was only another example of Hansen's grandstand play on what he termed "glamorous issues."

He said that Hansen has failed to show much effort on such major issues as military strength, energy, inflation and farm legislation. He did not spell out specifics on these issues but this is expected during the grueling primary campaign ahead.

Jones contends that a Republican could work effectively with the huge Democratic majority, such as does Sen. James A . McClure, and before him, Sen. Len B. Jordan.

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At present, it appears Hansen still remains strong among bulk of his constituents, particularly in East Idaho, but perhaps less so in other areas of the district.

His devout conservative followers will support Hansen whatever happens, just as they did when he was in danger of going to prison when convicted of campaign financing violations three years ago.

On the other hand, his opponents, who are the more moderate and independent voters, also will continue to vote against him, regardless of political issues and his personal stand.

But it's that crucial 5 to 10 percent of the voters who are less informed and less politically oriented who decide the elections. How they feel about Hansen's Iranian odyssey and its aftermath can be the deciding factor.

Hansen won this vote in his two battles with Democrat Stan Kress and primary struggle with Orval Hansen but lost them in his two senatorial attempts.

In the 1978 primary election, Hansen defeated Jones 37,500 to 28,000 or about 6.5 percent majority. This would indicate a narrow shift of only 5,000 votes could reverse their results.

Jones' avowed intentions to show that Hansen has been ineffective has been tried with little success by other opponents. His supporters apparently feel that Hansen's votes against virtually all spending bills and hassles with the federal bureaucracy satisfies them.

Hansen's Iranian trip and his expression of sympathy for some of the terrorists charges and investigation of the deposed shah is something else. It's not that the shah is that popular, but Americans feel this is blackmail and they won't accept forcing the shah to return to Iran.

It's with some amusement that Jones compared Hansen with ultra liberal Sen. Ted Kennedy in appeasing the Iranian terrorists for American action against the shah.

Hansen did display a so-called secret document he said he got from the Iranian students and revealed it as inviolable. It gives credibility to the hostage action and conceivably confusing American negotiations and stance.

The situation with Iran is certain to get worse before it gets better. As President Carter said, even if the hostages are released, "it does not wipe the slate clean."

This could mean some punitive action against Iran, whether it be merely economic blockade or military.

In that case, Hansen could become highly vulnerable for having appeased the enemy. That's the bottom line eventually.

If the Iranian situation moderates, however, Jones could face an uphill fight. Although condemned for his foray into delicate foreign affairs, Hansen is admired by many for the courage in making the trip and seeking in his own way to reach a solution.

Much will depend in retrospect how the voters feel in the light of what future developments take place.

On campaign trail

Post-Register/Robert Bower

JIM JONES, right, Jerome, who announced his candidacy Tuesday for Second District congressman in the Republican primary is seen with his Idaho campaign chairman, William Lanting, left, Hollister, a former 16-year veteran of the Idaho Legislature and House speaker eight years. Jones seeks to oust incumbent Rep. George Hansen, on the main issue that Hansen has been ineffective.