

# The Post-Register

## The political pulse

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Statehouse sidelights...

## East Idahoans listed possible PUC member

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Two East Idahoans are listed among nine mentioned so far for possible appointment to the Idaho Public Utilities Commission.

They are Rep. Elaine Kearnes, R-Idaho Falls, and Doyle C. Miner, now director of the Idaho Board of Pharmacy but a former longtime St. Anthony resident and who served eight years in the Legislature before resigning last summer to take his present position.

The appointment must be a Republican under state law as the other two members are Democrats, Conley Ward, Boise attorney, and Perry Swisher, a former Lewiston and Pocatello newspaperman.

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Behind-the-scene maneuverings indicate Gov. John V. Evans and his advisers may want an East Idahoan to give a geographical balance to the board but more important to represent East Idahoans who are somewhat unhappy with the rates imposed by the Utah Power & Light Co.

Mrs. Kearnes, an Idaho Falls businesswoman, could have an edge as not only is she from East Idaho but also a woman, which might help the governor's political standing with the fair sex.

Mrs. Kearnes was appointed state representative by a Democratic governor, Cecil D. Andrus, to fill a vacancy occasioned by the recall of Rep. Aden Hyde in 1971 and has held the position ever since. Also helping her chances is the fact she is considered a member of the moderate Republicans who often join hands with the Democrats on some legislation.

Mrs. Kearnes has yet to talk with the governor about the appointment but she said she is interested. She likely will have an opportunity to discuss the situation with Evans at Boise this week while attending the 1981 Idaho Legislature.

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Miner is intensely interested — so much so, that he is waging an active campaign for the appointment. Although considered a staunch conservative he won recognition in the last biennium as ably executing his duties as chairman of the powerful House Appropriation Committee.

The utilities are fighting his appointment because of his sponsoring an anti-piracy bill in the last session that would have prevented an electric company from taking power from another but this should be a mark in his favor, unless the opposi-

tion is unduly intense

Miner is contacting powerful East Idaho interests and individuals at this time to win support for the appointment.

Miner's present post pays \$24,000 yearly.

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Others mentioned for the position include Reps. Peggy Bunting and Kitty Gurnsey, both of Boise; Bill Norberg, former Canyon County commissioner; Max Rogers, former Emmett legislator; Helen McKinney, former Salmon legislator but who has served as secretary of the Caldwell Chamber of Commerce the past eight years and left her post recently; Max Yost, retired director of the Associated Taxpayers of Idaho; former State Sen. Richard High, Twin Falls; Ferd Koch, former Boise legislator; Rep. Steve Antone, R-Rupert; and Max Schlottman, Caldwell farmer and water leader.

Of these, Mrs. Gurnsey, Mrs. Bunting and Antone are reported to show no interest in the position.

The position pays \$32,000 a year and is for a six-year term.

Word from the governor's office is to the effect he wants to make the appointment by the end of the month but that at this time he has no clear-cut choice. He does acknowledge that Mrs. Kearnes is one of "those prominently mentioned."

There is also a possibility some other than those mentioned could be selected. The one nominated likely would have no trouble winning Senate confirmation since he would be a Republican and the Senate is controlled by the Republicans 23-12.

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The appointment is to replace another Republican, Ralph Wickberg, 65, a board member 22 years, who is mentioned as possible administrator for the Bonneville Power Administration. However, latest word indicates that he is not a cinch for the position as some newspaper reports indicate.

Since the IPUC became Democratic controlled it has more nearly represented the views of the public for which it was intended, rather than under the dominance of the public utilities as was the case under Republican governors.

The governor apparently wants to make certain the consumers will continue to be well represented on the IPUC and from his far East Idaho glimpse it would appear that a moderate from East Idaho could well win the appointment.