

Fuller sees Democrat Senate control hopes

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The optimistic and energetic Idaho Democratic chairman, Wayne Fuller, sees glittering chances in the Nov. 4 general elections for the Democrats to gain control of the State Senate and dramatically close the wide gap now existing in the House.

Fuller, a Caldwell attorney, said in a Post-Register interview that he feels the Democrats have excellent chances of picking up between 5 and 10 seats in each chamber.

If they win only two Senate Republican seats, they would gain control but they would need an almost impossible 16 turnovers in the lower chamber to gain the upper hand, a feat that even Fuller acknowledges is virtually impossible.

At present the Republicans control the State Senate 19-16 and the House 50-20.

Fuller said just as important are hopes for victory in at least three Senate leadership seats but he declined to name them.

However, the two obvious ones are Senate President Pro tem Reed Budge, Soda Springs, and Senate Majority Leader James Risch, Boise, who were generally blamed for the Senate non-cooperation, not only with the Democrats but also with the Republican House leaders.

Those two ordered the early adjournment of the Senate in the 1980 session without concurrence of the House but were forced to come back three days later and finish the job.

Fuller said two Democratic senators in East Idaho who face tough re-election challenges, Richard A. Egbert, Tetonia, and Israel Merrill, Blackfoot, are among the most effective in the upper chamber.

He said East Idaho depends on Egbert, the dean of the Legislature with 28 years of service and ranking minority member of the Joint Finance Appropriation Committee, to get key appropriations and legislation, regardless of partisanship.

He said Merrill, in the Senate leadership as caucus chairman, will likely move up as one of the party leaders, whether it be minority or majority leader or assistant.

Fuller said the Legislature will face knotty problems occasioned by a shortfall in revenue. He said, however, with the economy showing signs of an upturn the financial situation may not appear as serious as originally believed.

However, the matter of unexpected costs occasioned by the Idaho prison riot damages, the delinquent Medicaid payments of \$4 million or more, the Mount St. Helens volcano ash cleanup, and deficits in welfare and health payments are still critical financial problems.

Fuller said that in the matter of legislative reapportionment based on the 1980 census, he believes the proposal of Sen. Mike Mitchell, D-Lewiston, to establish a bipartisan commission to study and recommend the redistricting is excellent. He said this could save considerable legislative time. The Legislature could then have a basis for consideration and make whatever changes it needed.

In other matters, Fuller is optimistic for victories in the presidential and senatorial races and

also with hopes in the congressional contest, particularly the 1st District.

He said it appears President Carter is now coming on stronger and that Reagan will slip further in the polls.

Although he concedes Reagan likely will win Idaho he said Carter may do much better than people suspect — that it won't be the 2-1 margin most predict but possibly 55-45 and maybe even less.

Fuller said he does not see Republican Rep. Steve Symms able to ride on Reagan's coattails. He feels Sen. Frank Church, because of his outstanding effectiveness, will win handily, plus the fact, Symms has been uncovered at a legislator with no accomplishments and with a negative voting record.

"The fact Symms has been unable to enact any of the 136 bills he has sponsored should tell the people of Idaho something," said Fuller.

"If he really intended none of these bills to be passed he should explain," Fuller said.

Fuller said he sees an excellent chance for Democrat Glen Nichols, former Department of Employment director, to vanquish Republican State Sen. Larry Craig. The latest poll shows he has closed the gap to 4 percentage points in Ada County, indicating he is gaining rapidly.

Fuller said Nichols has walked throughout his district from the Canadian border to the Nevada line, and stopped and listened to thousands of voters.

"He has a keen insight and obtained the mood of the voters," said Fuller. "I feel the Democrats will pick up a seat in this district.

Fuller is frankly less hopeful in the 2nd district but believes Diane Bilyeu has conducted a fine campaign with the limited funds she has had. He said she has stressed the issues important in the district.

Fuller said Republican Rep. George V. Hansen has refused to debate her because he apparently does not wish to discuss the real issues in agriculture, senior citizens and human services where his record is deplorable.

"He had enacted no constructive piece of legislation in years," said Fuller. "He is only concerned with grandstanding and is poking his nose into areas where he has no business and certainly no expertise, such as visiting Iran," said Fuller.

"He has acted in a hypocritical manner in condemning congressmen for bribery violations but he still retains his seat, although he was convicted of federal criminal violations in disclosure of his campaign finances in 1976."

Fuller said it is ironic that Hansen sponsored the comparatively minor bill to change the name of Ririe Lake to Oscar Johnson Lake but this is meeting widespread opposition as witnessed by petitions signed by more than 1,000 opposing the name change. He said it likely will not be approved in the Senate.

Fuller also debated his Republican counterpart, Republican Chairman Dennis M. Olsen, on issues of energy, effectiveness in Congress and national defense in a video tape while here. This 30-minute program moderated by Mel Richardson will appear Saturday afternoon over KID Channel 3.