Former solon sees close Idaho Senate race

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The political pulse

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A former Idaho Republican congressman says the 1980 Idaho Senate race will depend largely on how high the people of Idaho value the seniority and leadership of U.S. Sen. Frank Church.

Orval Hansen, formerly of Idaho Falls and now an attorney in Washington, specializing in energy matters, says he feels the anticipated race between Democrat Church and Republican U.S. Rep. Steve Symms could be a "tough one."

Hansen, who served two terms in Congress 1970-74 and served in the Idaho Legislature several years, in both the House — where he was majority leader — and also in the Senate, says he feels Church "has compiled a record on the critical energy issues which have been supportive of Idaho's interest."

Hansen, in a Post-Register interview in Idaho Falls, pointed out "Idaho is blessed with a unique team in the U.S. Senate, governing both sides of the aisles."

Orval Hansen

He adds both Church and Republican Sen. James A. McClure are "able, highly respected and effective and this is no better demonstrated than in the energy area."

Exxon attorney

Hansen was in Idaho Falls the past week as an attorney counseling for Exxon Nuclear, which is taking over as prime contractor for waste management facilities and other programs from Allied Chemical at the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory.

Hansen says people must weigh the benefits Church has brought to the State of Idaho in his 23-year service. He has served as chairman of the Committee of Aging and is presently chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the Senate subcommittee on energy, research and development and is majority ranking member of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy.

Hansen says that as an Exxon attorney he likely will have occasion to come to Idaho Falls more frequently.

Regarding his future plans, Hansen says he is well-satisfied with his present occupation and couldn't afford to become a congressman with a $57,500 a year salary at the present time.

In future

He doesn't rule out public office in the distant future, particularly after three or four of his children have finished college.

Turning to the presidential race, Hansen says "the performance of President Carter has not been adequate to deal with the energy crisis and inflation."

"I think this is part of the reason for his low standing because energy is an important part of our economy. I think this has weakened him for re-election."

Of the Republican presidential prospects, Hansen says it appears none is a clearcut favorite but "several are very effective and would make good presidents."

He says John Connally, George Bush and Sen. Howard Baker seem to be generating some interest and have good strength.

Ronald Reagan appears the frontrunner at this time but "signs indicate some erosion and how far this proceeds by convention time will decide how well he does."