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Neophyte considers U.S. senatorial contest

By BEN J. PLASTINO

Post-Register political editor

A comparative unknown but personable candidate may carry the Democratic banner in 1984 senatorial contest against Republican Sen. James A. McClure.

A Lewiston man, Peter M. Busch, retired Marine lieutenant colonel, said he is ready to run.

He said in a Post-Register telephone interview he is awaiting word from the Federal Election Commission to clear the way. After that, it will be a question of lining up statewide support, getting contributions and planning for a vigorous campaign a year hence.

All of the better known political figures mentioned as possible McClure opponents have just about removed themselves from contention. In fact, it was more newspaper talk than actuality that they were even considered. This included former Idaho Gov. Cecil D. Andrus, who had always said he didn't want a Washington position; State Treasurer Marjorie Ruth Moon, State Sen. John Peavey, Carey rancher; and former state senator and 1982 lieutenant governor nominee, Mike P. Mitchell, Lewiston businessman.

Another one mentioned, State Sen. Vernon Lannen, Pinehurst, also has shown little interest.

Busch, 48 years old and retired after 20 years service as a Marine

pilot, leaves no doubt he is intensely interested to take on McClure.

"I like the odds and I'm prepared to try for the position, not go in as a token candidate," he said. "I'll go to win but if I don't, then I feel I'll be in a good position for 1990."

Busch said he is studying the key issues so that he will be prepared to take positions.

"One reason I'm prepared to run against McClure is because I'm oriented towards people and their programs," he said. "I believe it is more important to take care of the elderly than worry about basing MX missiles."

He added it is more important to prevent, rather than foster war.

Busch has an impressive background as a Marine pilot, winning the Purple Heart and what he calls other personal decorations in combat flying jets during the Vietnam War.

He was student body president at Lewiston High School in 1952, a Boys Stater in 1951, presently vice commodore for the Disabled American Veterans, attended Gonzaga University at Spokane and holds a master's degree in management from the University of Southern California.

Now divorced, he is father of three children and grandfather of three.

He has lived in Lewiston most of his non-military life, has taught

school and at present is engaged in the real estate business.

McClure also has prepared by sending 13,000 letters to prospective voters as the first step to raise \$1 million, half this year and half next year.

He has scheduled a reception at Elkhorn next Wednesday night which will cost those attending at least \$100 each.

McClure already received \$100,000 for his re-election campaign last month at a Washington, D.C. reception. Most of the money came from political action committees that agree with McClure's voting record.

McClure had little more than token opposition in 1978 when challenged by a Democrat freelance writer, Dwight Jensen, and won more than 70 percent of the vote.

Now in leadership as majority caucus chairman and also chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, he also is one of the favorites to become Senate majority leader to replace the retiring Tennessee veteran, U.S. Sen. Howard Baker.

It would appear that Busch faces awesome odds to oust a well entrenched Republican incumbent but his sentimental role as an underdog and an expected Democratic trend could spring a surprise.