

The election eye

Favorites emerging in primary contests

BY BEN J. PLASTINO

Post-Register political editor

Although interest lags for the May 25 primary election below that of previous years, a cursory survey indicates some favorites are emerging for 15 local races in the 10 east Idaho counties, including four on the legislative level.

The featured gubernatorial contest between Republicans Lt. Gov. Philip E. Batt and House Speaker Ralph Olmstead is whipping up some furor on the statewide scene but that's about it.

The other state contests hardly will send the voters rushing to the polling places in great numbers.

On the Republican side they include for lieutenant governor between Attorney General David H. Leroy and little known Hayden Lake naturopath Ron Hoye, a race which is really no contest; and for state auditor between Nolan Young, a former longtime Idaho Falls CPA but now of Boise, and Sen. Dean Van Engelen, Burley.

On the Democratic side the only race is between Richard H. Stallings, Rexburg, Ricks College professor, who must be considered a strong favorite over George Anthony, Buhl.

These races will be analyzed in a week.

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Of the four legislative primary contests, two are in Bingham County, one each in the Republican and Democratic ticket. The other two are on the Republican ballot, one in District 30, central Bonneville and west half of Shelley; and District 20, Jefferson, Clark, Lemhi and Custer counties.

In District 30 for the Republican nomination for state representative, most talk indicates the edge goes to K. Dale Leatham, Idaho Falls High School history teacher and former coach, over J. F. "Chad" Chadband, furniture merchant, and George J. Bever, realtor, in that order.

That's mainly because Leatham and his family are longtime residents of the area.

Chadband has been in business 23 years in Pocatello but came to Idaho Falls only nine years ago. He has been prominent in business circles.

Bever has not had such a wide exposure but he has been active in political circles.

All have mounted strong campaigns of varying degrees but there seems no great political differences among them with all stressing a strong conservative philosophy.

They are scrapping for the seat being vacated by Rep. Elaine Kearnes, R-Idaho Falls. The winner will meet Democrat Anne Voilleque in the Nov. 2 general election.

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The other race which is drawing some interest is for the Republican nomination for assessor among the incumbent, John J. Wasden; his former appraiser, Sherman Norris; and John Lurus, Iona farmer and fertilizer salesman. Lurus ran as a Democrat county commissioner candidate four years ago.

Norris has stirred some interest by his charges that Wasden has not operated the

office in an efficient and professional way and that bias is shown in tax appraisals. This allegation also has been leveled by Lurus. Wasden responds the office is managed properly.

The firing by Wasden of Norris on the first day of filing April 1 added fuel to the controversy.

An analysis would indicate that Wasden likely will win handily over Norris with Lurus trailing. The winner will oppose Aaron Robinson, a former Republican assessor but who is running on the Democrat ticket, in the November election.

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In another legislative race in District 20, most are inclined to give Joan Wood the nod over Lloyd Hicks for the Republican nomination to replace the retiring State Rep. Wayne E. Tibbitt. Most agree the contest could be close but Tibbitt's strong endorsement of Mrs. Wood might spell the difference. Mrs. Wood pictures herself as more conservative but Hicks contends he is more progressive, according to their campaign statements.

The other two in Bingham County seem to indicate that State Rep. Cornell Thomas, Pingree diet center executive, who was appointed to fill a vacancy at the start of the 1982 Legislature, should triumph over Gregg Calvin Goodwin. However, Goodwin is campaigning more vigorously and this could bring an upset.

In the Democratic tussle, most believe Ray Alexander, Blackfoot, a former state legislator, will nose out young Jerry Wellard but a Wellard triumph would not be a great surprise and many predict it. Wellard is campaigning the most vigorously of any. The two winners clash in the Nov. 2 general election finals.

Another interesting contest but of non-partisan nature brackets Magistrates Grant Young, Rigby, and Jerry Reynolds, St. Anthony; and Reid Larsen, Shelley attorney, and Brian R. Goates, Blackfoot attorney, seeking to replace retiring 7th Judicial District Judge Willard Burton.

Based on a geographically and with populous Bonneville as the key county, it would appear that Young in nearby Rigby and whose family lives in Idaho Falls, should lead. He likely will be followed by Larsen, who resides in nearby Shelley. His family is well known as result of his brother, Allan Larsen, Blackfoot farmer, being a longtime legislator and the 1978 Republican gubernatorial nominee.

However, it is unlikely one will get a majority over the other three so the two highest will qualify for the November election, probably Young and Larsen.

The other 13 contests for county offices are largely one of personal popularity, rather than local issues.

Republicans likely will outvote Democrats by more than a 3-1 ratio because of the more contests and a usually large Republican majorities. But unless the interest takes a significant last-minute spurt the turnout likely will fall well below the 40 percent of the registered voters that was attained in each the 1980 and 1978 primary elections.