

Jones urges merging state attorneys

BY BEN J. PLASTINO
Post-Register political editor

Sun Sept 20, 1981

Jim Jones, Jerome attorney, the only announced candidate for attorney general, said while here late this week in his opening campaign tour, that he would strongly favor consolidating all state attorneys under the attorney general's office.

This is a proposal Republican attorney generals have advocated but have been blocked by Democratic Govs. John V. Evans and Cecil D. Andrus. The governors have contended it would give the attorney general's office excess power and also hamper the legal operations in the governor's office.

Jones, however, said he feels he could present an effective case to the Legislature and perhaps to the governor. He pointed out it would save considerable money and vastly improve efficiency by placing all state attorneys under one umbrella.

At present there are attorneys under the governor's office, the Department of Health and Welfare, Department of Law Enforcement, and perhaps other state agencies not supervised by the attorney general. The consolidation would bring some 18-19 attorneys now under contract with the state, administered by the attorney general's office.

Jones also said he would remove the state from pressing a lawsuit promoting the Sagebrush Rebellion, pointing out the Department of Interior policies under Secretary Jim Watt have made such a step unnecessary.

"I think at the time the Sagebrush Rebellion was inaugurated people objected to the lack of input and dialogue they had with the federal government," said Jones. "I have known Watt for a long time and I believe he would be willing to listen to problems. Many of the abuses and problems that led to the rebellion have been taken care of. I think we can look forward to much better cooperation on part of the federal government in the matter of state participation on the use of public lands."

Jones also advocated lengthening the prosecutor's term from two to four years, saying under the present system, there is a large turnover of prosecutors. He also said he felt the county commissioners should decide on the amount of salaries, not the Legislature which sets them but requires the county to pay them.

Jones said, if elected, he would work closely with county prosecutors in helping process appeal cases in the Supreme Court and other special assistance they may ask for special prosecution.

Jones pointed out only a small part of the attorney general office is connected with criminal law. He contended his association with handling criminal cases would enable him to handle such duties without any problem.

In other matters, he said he looks forward to the new magistrate court of appeals eliminating the tremendous backlog of pending Supreme Court appeals; would like to see more modernization in the court administration, along with cooperation from attorneys; and believes it would be worth looking into a system for selecting regional attorneys to serve more than one county where counties are too small for one prosecuting attorney.

Jones said his two 2nd District congressional primary races against Rep. George V. Hansen, although unsuccessful, have helped him get considerable name recognition, especially in the southern section of the state.

"I don't think most people objected to me running in a contested Republican primary. There may have been some slight ill will but the primaries were not bitter."

He pointed out he is the only formally announced candidate, although J. D. Williams, Malad, has indicated he may enter the Democratic primary; and Jim Harris, Boise, Ada County prosecutor, has hinted he also may jump into the Republican contest.

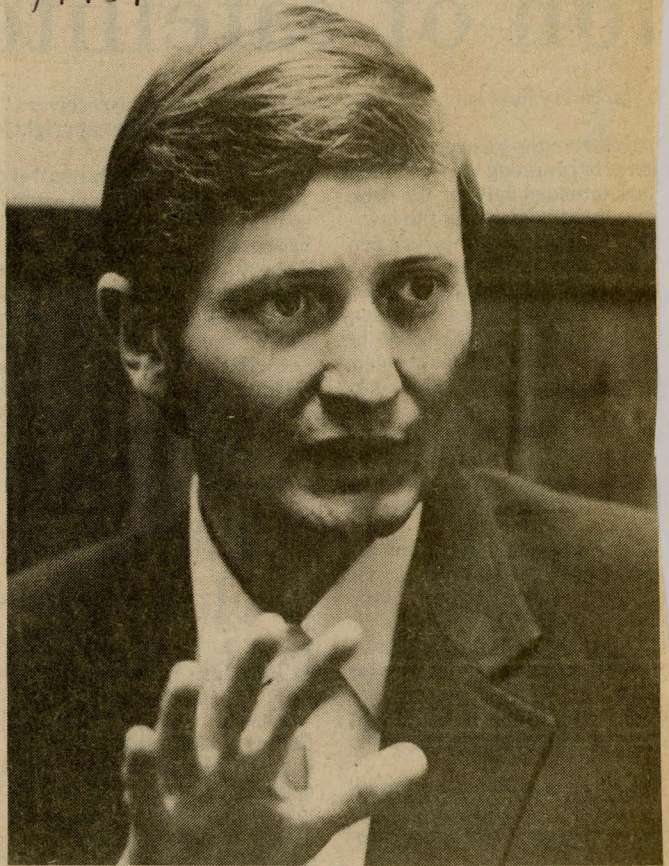
Jones said he likely will spend \$60,000 in the Republican primary if there is a contest and possibly twice that much in the general.

He noted that as long as he can remember a Boise attorney had been elected attorney general, the last two previously serving as Ada County prosecutors.

Jones said he made a trip to Lewiston and Coeur d'Alene earlier in the month and felt he had good support in those regions.

He said he plans to name East Idaho county chairmen soon, along with campaign chairmen in most other counties of the state.

Jones, 39, grew up on a farm in Eden, and has helped in the family farm and feedlot operations.



Jim Jones

He graduated from the University of Oregon in 1964 and gained his law degree from Northwestern University in 1967, winning a spot on the dean's list.

He spent two years in the army, 13 months of them in Vietnam, and attained the rank of a captain.

After graduation, he served as legislative assistant to U.S. Sen. Len B. Jordan for two years until Jordan retired.

For the last eight years he has served as practicing attorney at Jerome but the firm now has two other attorneys and Jones said he feels he wants to indulge in his first love-service with the government.