The Post-Register
The political pulse

The city scene...

City elections offer only political actions

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Political activities look slim for this fall except for city elections, although there should be some early sparring for the 1982 state elections.

All municipalies will hold elections in November, the larger ones for mayors and council, while many of the smaller cities will be limited to councilmen only.

It will be a time for reckoning to determine if the city administrations have run their municipalities to the likening of the voters. In past years, incumbents are usually re-elected but occasionally there are changes.

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In Idaho Falls, Mayor Thomas Campbell and Councilmen Melvin Erickson, Paul Hovey and Ralph Wood are finishing the end of their four-year terms but all have indicated they will seek re-election. Based on past voting records all are strong, particularly the mayor who looks a solid favorite.

Erickson, the present mayor pro tem, has served 16 years; Hovey 12 years and Wood eight years.

The salary isn't too bad and it was raised recently. The mayor gets $29,640 and the parttime councilmen $4,800 a year.

This early in the year there are few rumors about possible candidates. Among those mentioned are Willian R. "Bill" Jones, city customer electrical service director who is retiring this year; Mrs. Pat Bybee, business leader; Kent Just, businessman and former Greater Idaho Falls Chamber of Commerce executive vice president; and Alex Creek civic leader and former city councilmen.

There also is a possibility some of those who ran unsuccessfully two years ago might take another try, such as former City Clerk Roy C.Barnes; Marion Orme and Al Pasta. Barnes and Orme barely were nosed out of victory.

All these are in the talking stages and at this time none has indicated any definite intentions at this time.

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On basis of past election records, those who solidly back the city administration run the strongest. Two years ago, for example, although Campbell was not a candidate the five who ran far ahead of the 12-man field were the administration's strongest supporters and those in opposition finished far in the rear.

In that contest, an appointed incumbent, Sam Sakaguchi, easily end on top with 4,243 votes, followed by Wesley W.Deist 2,880 and Art Chandler 2,872.

Just out of the winners' circle were former City Clerk Roy C. Barnes with 2,601, and Marion Orme 2,263. Seven others were well behind in the record large field of 12.

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There have been few serious complaints against the city administration, mostly centered among a small segments regarding zoning. Municipal taxes are comparatively low and the city had taken giant progressive strides in installing the bulb turbine plants and new transmission lines, and expanding the municipal airport.

The main protests have been among some west side residents who object to the west side transmission lines but they aren't city residents and their numbers are comparatively small.

The filing deadline is not more than 60 days nor less than 30 days before the Nov.3 election, giving plenty of time for prospective candidates to ponder.

At present there are 21,630 registered voters and anyone over 18 who is a citizen of the United States and a resident of the city can register if not already registered for city or county elections.

Four years ago, the mayor won over a strong field with 4,558 votes, followed by former Bonneville County Commisioner Art Detrick 3,643 and Karl G. Page, former city councilman, 2,369. Two others, W. Van Frandsen and Dan Peterson were well behind.

For councilmen, Erickson led with 8,485, followed by Hovey 7,786 and Wood 7,503. Deist, the lone challenger, was out of the running with 6,629.

Under a longtime political axiom, if there is more than one challenger to the incumbent, he is at a disadvantage because he needs to split the opposition vote. Under this premise, if more than two file for mayor and more than six enter the city councilmen contests, the incumbents hold the definite edge.