

## **THE CARLSON CHRONICLE**

### **The Idaho Primary's Biggest Winner**

In looking at the results of the May 20<sup>th</sup> primary in Idaho, it is clear that the biggest winner was easily Second District incumbent Mike Simpson. He trounced Tea Party/Club for Growth primary challenger Bryan Smith, an Idaho Falls attorney, by a 68% to 32% margin.

By educating second district voters to how weird some of the positions held by Tea Party adherents are, and how badly they will distort an incumbent's record as a rock-solid conservative, Simpson undoubtedly saved Governor C. L. "Butch" Otter's candidacy for a third term.

Butch ought to send Mike a box of fresh Idaho spuds every month for the next four years and he ought to offer to come by once a month to kiss Simpson's ring while slicing, dicing and cooking up the hash browns.

Make no mistake about it, while Otter won on Tuesday, he was still the biggest loser. While voter turnout was abysmally low, something the Tea Party purists wanted (Only the pure of heart and only 100% God-fearing, gun-toting, government-hating, education-bashing, ObamaCare haters) were meant to vote in the GOP's closed primary.

They got their wish, so to speak, by holding the primary vote totals statewide to between 20% and 25% of eligible voters. This enabled their favored candidates, especially gubernatorial challenger State Senator Russ Fulcher of Meridian, to mount a more effective challenge because the universe of votes needed to win was suddenly much, much smaller.

The day after Governor Otter must have been literally stunned to see that he lost not just rural counties where Tea Party organization was presumably stronger, but he also lost Ada County, his home county of Canyon and Kootenai---in other words he lost the urban/suburban vote in the First District as well. A challenge from his right also had to stun the self-proclaimed libertarian.

The results showed how well First District congressman Raul Labrador read his district and correctly calculated that endorsing Fulcher over Otter in the latter days of the campaign would not hurt him.

Where Otter pulled it out was in the urban areas of Bonneville, Bannock, Bingham and Twin Falls counties---the cities of Idaho Falls, Pocatello, Blackfoot and Twin Falls. Otter also narrowly carried the LDS vote in most of the Mormon counties of eastern Idaho.

The only conclusion one can draw when an incumbent sees only slightly more than half the voters voting to return him in his own party's primary is that a lot of people don't think he has done anything to merit a third term. Furthermore, many folks did not like his cooking the numbers on his bogus claim of reaching \$60 billion in gross state product, nor do they like him sounding like the Luna Education Reform laws he supported never existed.

And his turning the statewide debate into a farce that had the entire nation laughing at Idaho did little to enhance the governor's image since he insisted the two flakes be included knowing full well they would steal lots of time from Senator Fulcher.

Truth and the facts are catching up with Butch, who clearly should have stepped aside and let Brad Little have his day. Little, incidentally was far and away the biggest statewide voter-getter, receiving 100,000 votes in the primary.

In winning his primary easily Simpson once again demonstrated the power of incumbency and the potency of the formula that dictates a member of Congress take care of his constituents and be surrounded by excellent staff. Voters are well aware that investing in seniority makes sense and Simpson can prove he has used his position as one of the appropriation "cardinals" to take good care of his district's largest employer, the Idaho National Lab.

Furthermore, Simpson incontestably has the best most service oriented staff in the delegation. Anyone who has any contact with Simpson's office invariably sings the praises of chief of staff Lindsay Slater, or deputy chief John Revier or press secretary Nicki Watts.

It is also a safe bet that Simpson further enhanced his already high standing with many of his congressional colleagues for standing up to the concentrated attack on his record, his integrity and his conservative credentials. By kicking Bryan Smith in the proverbial creek he showed his

colleagues and others that one need not fear Club for Growth financed challengers.

Noted for his loyalty as well as his competence, in this writer's view Simpson further enhanced his prospects for one day, sooner than one might think, being the second member of Congress from the west (Tom Foley from the adjacent to Idaho Fifth congressional district in the state of Washington was the first), and the first Republican, to be elected Speaker of the House of Representatives.