

# Crapo is knocking on Bill Borah's door

**Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune**

He has more than \$3.5 million socked away in a campaign treasury.

And he seems to have discouraged any serious threat to his re-election. Were one in the making, an opponent would have emerged by now. The GOP primary is 10 months away, so it's getting late.

He's been coronated before. He actually ran unopposed in 2004.

But such longevity is not the norm in Idaho.

With nearly 24 years in Washington, D.C. - six in the House, 18 in the Senate - Crapo's tenure already has eclipsed that of Len Jordan, Compton White, Steve Symms and Henry Dworshak.

He's about to pull even with Sen. Jim McClure, R-Idaho, and Sen. Frank Church, D-Idaho. Both of them served 24 years.

That leaves Congressman Burton French, R-Idaho, who served 26 years, and Sen. Larry Craig, R-Idaho, whose 28-year career ended abruptly in scandal.

Another term would mean 30 years in office for Crapo - leaving him second only to Sen. William E. Borah, who died in 1940, just two months shy of completing 33 years in office.

This is more than trivial. It begs some questions:

- What does Crapo expect to accomplish in the next six years that he has not already produced in the past 24?

McClure could boast of delivering substantial appropriations to the Idaho National Laboratory and steering public lands policy.

Church had passed a wilderness bill, investigated the intelligence community and secured ratification of the Panama Canal Treaty.

Craig was responsible for the Secure Rural Schools program and lining up earmarks for INL, Mountain Home Air Force Base and the university system.

Crapo famously chose not to succeed Craig and McClure on the appropriations committee. And so far, his legislative achievements narrow to creating a wilderness area in the Owyhee Canyonlands.

- Idaho is not the same place it was when young Mr. Crapo went to Washington. Its population has grown by a half-million people. The state is more urbanized. Its economy depends more on high-tech and service-sector employment than agricultural, timber and mining. And it's a creature of one-party rule - something no one saw coming in 1992.

Has he lost touch?

- Has Washington changed Crapo more than the other way around? Crapo was a Boy Scout, someone so nerdy, so devoutly Mormon that he'd be the last person you'd expect to get picked up on a drunken driving charge around Christmas 2012. Or the last individual who the next year had to admit his campaign treasury lost \$250,000 on a risky Nevada real estate investment.

Yet Crapo has not come home and explained, in detail, what went wrong.

How come?

- As a state legislator and early in his congressional career, Crapo occupied the reasonable middle of his party.

No longer. Once a dependable vote for farm bills and transportation programs, Crapo recently voted against both.

He's also found himself supporting budget measures that would have devastated the INL.

Rather than risk a challenge from the right, Crapo has formed alliances with former GOP gubernatorial candidate Russ Fulcher and conservative activist Lou Esposito.

Earlier this summer, Crapo called up Boise talk radio host "Tea Party Bob" Neugebauer and commended nine Idaho lawmakers who nearly sabotaged the state's child support enforcement program.

What happened to this former member of the Simpson-Bowles Commission and the Gang of Eight? Then, Crapo stood up to anti-tax guru Grover Norquist by acknowledging the federal budget would not balance on cuts alone.

Now, no one's really sure whether Crapo will vote to stop another government shutdown or a credit default if it means alienating his allies within the Tea Party wing of the GOP.

- Crapo has raised millions of dollars, altered his voting pattern and placated the right wing of his party. In the process, he appears to have waved off serious opposition.

That's what you'd expect from a career politician.

When did Crapo become one? - M.T.

