

# Three to Watch

Chris Carlson/Carlson Chronicle

There are three people, two of them aspiring public office holders, and the third a long-time veteran that political junkies in Idaho should keep their eye on over the next few weeks and months. I'll admit bias right up front: one aspirant is a former student of mine and the other is a talented attorney I have known since he was "knee high to a graas-hopper."

Both are answering a call to public service and are the kinds of folks we should want to serve. The veteran has proven time and again that he relishes public service and is exceptionally good at it. He now may be the answer to a problem confronting his party.

The former student is Kathy Kahn, an outstanding educator who teaches English Literature at St. Maries High School. After 27 years Kahn will retire next May, but only to take on a new challenge. She is seriously weighing taking on Second District State Representative Vito Barbieri. Demonstrating a degree of sophistication few rookies evidence she has formed a political action committee to accept contributions while she travels the district to assess her prospects.

She intends to run as an "Andrus Democrat," but the district is solidly a 2:1 Republican district and she is well aware that despite numerous gaffes by the incumbent it will be an uphill battle to unseat him.

She has turned heads though by attracting former veteran State Senator Mike Blackbird to serve as her campaign chair and is raising money as well as putting together a string of visits after work hours and on weekends with the interest groups around the district.

Her first bumper sticker is already showing up on autos, particularly on the cars of a cadre to North Idaho College students, which says "Kathy Kahn Can" and leaves one saying "can do what?" The answer is Kathy Kahn can win, Kathy Kahn can do better, Kathy Kahn cares.

Vito Barbieri may still win, but he'll know he was in the fight of his political life. My money says Kahn will run and win.

The second aspiring public servant is attorney Andy Hawes, grandson of the almost legendary Rodney Hawes, publisher of the *Owyhee Nugget*, literally the last hotlead set printing press in the west. Grandpa Hawes was a classic but charming curmudgeon. Young Hawes, besides inheriting grandpa's intelligence got the charm also. He turned a few heads when he filed for the seat on the Boise City Council currently held by three-term incumbent Elaine Clegg.

Hawes has nothing against Clegg. He goes out of his way to say his campaign will build on the good work done so far by Mayor Dave Bieter and the current Council. "But Boise can and must do better," Hawes says. He then smoothly moves to his list of issues: Boise has to come to terms with the homeless issue and in a compassionate manner get at the root causes; continued support for open space, the greenbelt and foothills expansion (He supports the Clean Water bond also); and, working with downtown business, both large and small, on street parking and the over-regulatory approach the city has towards new, small business.

Though only 35, Hawes already has served as president of the Idaho Bar and was one of the leaders in saving Boise High from the wrecking ball. He recently held a quickly organized fund-raiser that attracted 75 folks and garnered \$10,000. He says people should thank Clegg for her service but 12 years is enough in any one office, that its time for a change and new energy. He's a solid bet.

The third name Second District Congressman Mike Simpson. For many reasons the former Idaho House Speaker and dentist from Blackfoot has decided to retain his House appropriations subcommittee chairmanship and not get into the current cat fight between the hard right (Which is where one finds First District Congressman Raul Labrador) and the Tea Party wing of the GOP that favors Utah Rep. Jason Chavetz for Speaker and the moderate to conservative wing which supports Majority Leader and California congressman Kevin McCarthy.

Some observers had thought that when John Boehner gave up the Speakership he might support a bid by Simpson. Simpson, however, has reportedly told friends he would not run for Speaker. He enjoys being a "Cardinal."

This, however, is a smart strategy for it appears that over the next two weeks Chafetz with the aid of Idaho's other congressman, Rep. Labrador (The *Spokesman-Review* reported this week that Simpson and Labrador have not spoken to each other in months) will be able to deny McCarthy the votes he needs (218) to be elected.

Then all hell breaks loose. A possible compromise candidate, when the smoke clears, could be Rep. Simpson, who, an educated guess says would let the crown be hoisted onto his head at least until this session of Congress ends.

Keep your eye on all three of these folks: Kathy Kahn, Andy Hawes, and Mike Simpson.