

Laxalt Hoping for a Comeback in Nevada In an Attempt to Succeed Bible in Senate

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SPARKS, Nev., Oct. 23—Paul Laxalt, a 52-year-old former Governor, is trying a political comeback here in a Republican effort to pick up a normally Democratic Senate seat.

Mr. Laxalt's opponent, Lieut. Gov. Harry Reid, 34, seeks to continue a rapid political ascent that began in southern Nevada with a hospital trusteeship.

Both men, plus Jack Doyle of the Independent American party, are vying for the seat held for 20 years by Alan Bible, who is retiring in poor health. Some polls indicate that Mr. Reid holds a lead of perhaps half a dozen percentage points.

A Stolid Style

But the mood of the voters seems so volatile, and perhaps apathetic, in this politically chaotic year that no professional politicians here are willing to make predictions on the outcome Nov. 5.

Mr. Laxalt has a reputation as a strong finisher. But he has had to live down a political association with the first Nixon Administration and with President Ford, whose views on amnesty, Presidential pardons and income surtaxes are as popular in Nevada as a Baptist preacher in a casino.

Mr. Reid, who munches mints as he shakes hundreds of shopping centers and hospital, as the support of labor and the Mormon church, to which he belongs. But his stolid speaking style ignites few listeners.

A Reid victory would mean that both Senators were from south Nevada, a break with tradition. And some voters seem bothered by his inferences regarding the finances of Mr. Laxalt and his family.

Such attacks are often considered "impolite" in this vast

state whose residents all still live in one single telephone area code. Although Nevada is the seventh largest state in area, its population of about half a million is smaller than that of many cities, and Nevada has maintained a small-town political atmosphere.

Campaigns are low-key, folksy and informal. Candidates refer to one another like high school chums—Paul and Harry, Mike and Shirley.

"Hi, Lee, how's your tennis game?" said Mr. Laxalt at one gathering. "Laurie, how's Bill? Betty, how's the pride of Virginia City?"

"Hi," says Mr. Reid to a squad of shoppers at a Reno mall, "could I say to hello, please? I'm Harry Reid." They chatted amiably and parted.

"Who's Harry Reid?" one woman asked. "I don't know," another replied, "but he's friendly." Mr. Reid considers it too forward to solicit votes openly.

But such niceties rarely extend to the opposition. In joint appearances, Mr. Reid reads some Watergate testimony linking Mr. Laxalt to Howard R. Hughes, the billionaire recluse who purchased several Nevada casinos during Mr. Laxalt's governorship (1966-70). And he notes that Mr. Laxalt went several million dollars in debt to build his own casino-hotel, the Ormsby House in Carson City.

Mr. Laxalt denies any improprieties, the former Governor says Mr. Hughes is generally good for Nevada and adds, "I've been out of politics for four years and had as much to do with Watergate as Mr. Reid had with Cappaquidick."

At other times the graying Mr. Laxalt, a former Lieutenant Governor who narrowly lost a Senate race to Senator Howard W. Cannon in 1964, recalls his World War II service and then refers to Mr. Reid as "a decent young man" who, however, "is so young that he doesn't even belong in the Lieutenant Governor's seat."

Would Cut Foreign Aid

Both men agree that inflation is the country's worst threat. But they differ on the solution. Mr. Reid, a physical fitness buff who regularly jogs several miles, would cut government spending by reducing the maze of Federal agencies, a bureaucracy that controls much of Nevada life and that, according to Mr. Reid, has become a dangerous fourth branch of government.

Mr. Laxalt would cut the foreign aid budget drastically. "We've been an international Santa Claus too long with too much," he says.

In the race for Nevada's sole House seat, David Towell, the 37-year-old Republican incumbent, faces a stiff challenge from James Santini, a 36-year-

Political Profile 1974

Population: 488,738 (1970)
 White 448,177 91.7%
 Black 27,762 5.7%
 Other 12,799 2.6%

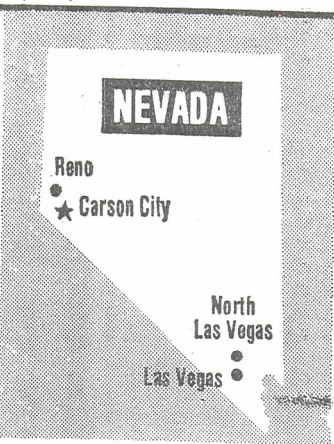
Jobless Rate: 7.9% (Aug.)

**Vote in 1972
 Presidential Election:**
 Nixon 63.7%
 McGovern 36.3%

**Congressional
 Representation:**
 Senate 2 (D)
 House 1 (R) at large

Statewide Races:

Senate Harry Reid (D) Governor Mike O'Callaghan (D)*
 Paul Laxalt (R) Shirley Crumpler (R)
 *Incumbent



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old district judge.

Like a growing number of Nevada's politicians, Mr. Santini lives in the more populous—and Democratic — Las Vegas area. Statewide, Democrats outregister Republicans by more than 50,000.

Mr. Towell is from Gardnerville in the northern Douglas County, the state's only faithful Republican stronghold.

The Congressional race now is rated a toss-up, unlike the governorship contest. There, Republicans and Democrats expect an easy re-election for Gov. Mike O'Callaghan, a 45-year-old Democrat who has parlayed a scandal-free term, easy accessibility, a ready smile and an excellent working knowledge of the press into one of the state's more popular administrations.

His opponent is Shirley Crumpler, a 39-year-old political neophyte who is one of three women seeking governorships this year as major-party

candidates. The others are Ella T. Grasso, Democrat, in Connecticut, and Louise Gore, Republican, in Maryland.

Mrs. Crumpler, a Las Vegas tax consultant who is also the first Republican woman ever nominated for Governor, is not given any chance of success now. She constantly finds herself trying to persuade voters that a woman really can handle the burden of a major political office. "That's the hard part," she says.

Political observers here give her credit, however, for her campaigning energy and her hard-hitting criticism of Mr. O'Callaghan, which sometimes seems designed less to elect Mrs. Crumpler than to keep the popular Governor from helping fellow Democrats in other races.

James R. Houston, a wealthy 38-year-old silver speculator, is the governorship candidate of the Independent American party.