

NEWS

BY CARISSA WOLF

DEM'S THE NEW DEMS

Leaders forecast "seismic political changes"

Brian Cronin isn't the kind of politico to divulge a battle strategy in a public forum. The newly elected chair of the Ada County Democrats slings a powerful word here and there as owner of a marketing and communications firm, but he keeps his lips sealed about how he plans to spur fellow Democrats and swing voters to take ownership of the state's underdog party. He simply says we can expect something big.

"We're on the verge of some seismic political changes here in Ada County and I'm committed to working very hard so that all the residents of this county get the representation they deserve," Cronin said in a written statement released after electing two new officers to lead county Democrats last month. Joan Wallace, the District 16 Legislative Chair, was also elected as the new Vice-Chair by the Ada County Democrats Central Committee.

Cronin tells *BW* he credits some of the seismic changes to benefit the Democratic party to simple demographics and the urbanization of the Treasure Valley.

"We're on the cusp of turning this county blue," says the former legislative candidate.

Ada county voters tend to swing to a different end of the political continuum compared to the rest of the state. Democrats have enjoyed a majority rule in several legislative districts, and Democrat

Jerry Brady won the Ada County vote in the 2002 gubernatorial election.

"We have every reason to be hopeful," Cronin says. "We can elect democrats in Ada County."

An influx of Treasure Valley newcomers fuels that hope. Idaho's Republican representatives tend to come from rural Idaho and don't always push for what some would consider urban needs such as public transportation, improved air quality and accessible health care, Cronin says.

"The Democrats have been advocating these issues for a number of years." Plus, Cronin says, "People are getting the sense that the people in the Statehouse don't have to listen to anyone." Take the effort during the last legislative session to deregulate Qwest, he says. "There's no way this helps anyone but Qwest and I think Republicans would agree with that. Why is so much time spent helping a big corporation when it could hurt a lot of people?"

The challenge, Wallace says, is communicating how Democrats represent folks' interests. "We need to do a better job of explaining how their lives are affected by the decisions they make in the voting booth."

Cronin hints that the party may sling a powerful word here and there to get their message across. His message: "The party needs you." **BW**