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Morehead

Texan Bush far from through

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AUSTIN — George Bush told a statewide Republican group the other night that he is far from through with politics.

A youthful-looking 52, Bush didn't indicate any interest in becoming a candidate again, although he is being mentioned as a prospect both for governor and president.



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What Bush said he is most interested in is building a broader Republican party which can make a significant impact on the future courts of the United States.

If Bush can help heal divisions within the Republican party in Texas, it will be a good start.

The 1976 political year did nothing for Republican unity in Texas, although it may have been strengthened by having two working organizations. One came in the presidential primary, where conservative backers of Ronald Reagan swept the Texas delegate vote.

Many of the Reagan loyalists returned to the fold behind President Ford in November, but some wounds linger.

THE OTHER DIVISION was between the "regular" GOP state organization and the Associated Republicans of Texas, (ART), led by Julian Zimmerman of Austin. Their difference here was whether to put the state party's emphasis (and money) on national race or to apply the energy and cash to "grassroots" races — courthouses and the state house.

ART, which sponsored the Bush reception here, put its effort into 27 state and local races and elected 14 Republican candidates in a year when the party's fortunes generally were low.

ART-backed winners included Sheriff Carl Thomas of Dallas and State Rep. Bob McFarland of Arlington. And Tom Pauken of Dallas ran a very strong race against incumbent Sen. Bill Braecklein.

Last year, \$62,000 of ART money went into grassroots campaigns. The \$125-per-plate Bush dinner put another \$50,000 in the bank for 1978, sponsors reported. Nearly 600 persons attended.

State Republican Chairman Ray Hutchison of Dallas, who belongs to the "regular" faction, said it plans to field a full slate of candidates next year. Hutchison himself is eyeing either a race for governor or attorney general, and pledges if he runs it will be for an office he considers "winnable."

THE PARTY'S big national candidate in 1978 will be U.S. Sen. John Tower. Former President Ford will speak at a Tower fund-raiser June 3 in Houston. On June 17, the party will sponsor a \$125-per-plate fund-raiser in Dallas. Bush will attend these too, along with other GOP notables. Bush now is a Houston bank executive.

Bush told his audience here the prospect of building a strong Republican party in Texas is "exciting." He said Texas Republicans have an opportunity to make a far greater contribution to the success of the party and its principles than is the case in most states.

"I have an inner confidence we can do it," said Bush, one of the national party's brightest stars. He has suffered disappointment — two defeats for the U.S. Senate in Texas, and a narrow loss of the vice-presidential appointment to Nelson Rockefeller.

But Bush has great accomplishments too — head of the Central Intelligence Agency, an ambassador-level post in the Republic of China, ambassador to the United Nations, national Republican chairman, and two terms as a congressman from Houston.

He isn't defensive about Nixon or Watergate. Bush says, as he did earlier, "The Republican party wasn't involved in Watergate." The trouble came from Nixonites outside the party organization.

"Our ideals weren't defeated in 1976," Bush said of the national elections. He mentioned fiscal responsibility as a long-term Republican plea that Democrat Jimmy Carter used successfully to win the nomination and election.

Bush also plans to stand firmly against weakening the nation's intelligence agencies.

"I'M GOING TO spend time talking about those who attack the CIA and the FBI," he said.

He called post-Watergate attacks on pre-Watergate methods of the FBI "unfair." He added for the CIA, "We've got to know what the Russians are doing."

Bush expressed skepticism that the current U.S. Congress can deal effectively with the nation's problems. But he said Republicans should accent the positive, rather than merely taking a negative attitude about the Democrats.

"We must do more than whine; more than carp," Bush counseled.