

POLITICS

a voter's guide to the 1996 election and life on the campaign trail

THIS WEEK
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SOUND OFF
 What did you think of the final presidential debate between President Clinton and Bob Dole?

ISSUE: AMTRAK

ON THE ISSUES

Question: Would you increase, decrease, eliminate or leave unchanged the amount of federal money supporting the national passenger railway?



"The administration is working to transform Amtrak into a commercially focused and cost-effective provider of quality transportation service. To accomplish our goal of eliminating Amtrak's dependence on federal operating subsidies by 2002, we are proposing a stable level of capital investment to permit Amtrak to modernize its equipment and facilities. The administration is also proposing a decreasing level of operating assistance."

—President Bill Clinton, Democratic candidate



"I was among the earliest advocates of Amtrak privatization. We have reached the point where each Amtrak passenger costs the federal government — which is to say, the American taxpayer — more than \$400 for each trip he or she takes. We can no longer afford to subsidize Amtrak at these levels. As president, I would propose that my secretary of transportation review these plans and present me with a privatization plan that can be implemented."

—Bob Dole, Republican candidate



"Every government program must pass a cost-benefit analysis. Amtrak needs to demonstrate that it provides enough benefits to the public to warrant its cost to the taxpayers."

—Ross Perot, Reform Party candidate

SOURCE: Associated Press

Students speak out on debate

ELECTION DEBATE: Student supporters of each candidate believe the two accomplished their goals

By Doug Irving
 Community Reporter

President Clinton and Bob Dole spoke to America last night from the University of San Diego.

An audience of about 20 University students listened intently from Carson Residence Hall's television room.

"I just felt I needed to watch," said student Bryan Orthel. "All the issues that are actively being discussed will affect us."

This debate featured a town hall format that allowed the candidates to answer questions from ordinary people, said David Wade, the president of College Democrats of America.

"We as students really care about issues," he said. "We really want to see a real dialogue and that's what a town hall meeting is."

This format also attracted students because it forced the candidates to focus on real issues, Wade said.

"This is about students coming together," he said. "It was about us listening to ideas. I think it's going to get students to the polls."

Dole had promised to focus on Clinton's ethical problems as part of his debate strategy. For Clinton-supporter Cora Bennett, this tactic did not help Dole.

"I think he did come out stronger but his attack approach undermined his ideas," she said.

Dole supporters agreed that he did come out stronger in this debate, but avoided personal attacks and focused on issues that matter to the country.

"He did raise questions on public issues," said Gail Johnson, the southern chairwoman of the College Republican Federation of Oregon. "He called the president on a lot of things. I think it's so important that people examine the record."

The format also allowed Dole to discuss



MATHEW STIFFLER/Emerald

Students in the Carson Television room watch the debates on Thursday night.

his issues and bring out important points that may not have come out in a different debate format, said Liz Bobek, a member of the University College Republicans.

"I think he represented his positions really well," she said. "We're very proud of him."

Wade said Clinton reacted well to the format by staying positive and answering questions about the issues. Because of this, his approach is more attractive to college students, he said.

"Young people get turned off by harsh partisan attacks," he said. "I think [Clinton] covered the issues that matter to this generation and I was very happy that he stayed positive."

Despite some overly-broad questions, the candidates dealt with the questions well and were able to use them to answer larger issues, Bennett said.

"I think they both did a good job bringing out their policies and their ideas," she said.

Debates can have marginal effects on undecided voters, said Jim Lemert, a University professor who has studied presidential campaigns. However, debates tend to have a greater effect on people who already have an idea of whom they will vote for.

"[A debate] can swing the result of an election simply by reinforcing those who have doubts," he said. "It's a little naive to look for extensive attitude change."

However, all sides agreed that students must get out and vote, regardless of whom they cast their vote for. They must examine issues that will affect them, make educated choices and participate.

"We have more invested in this country in the next 50 years than anyone else," Wade said.



ON THE BALLOT

A look at some of the 23 ballot measures in the November 5 election

THE MEASURE

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WHAT IT WOULD DO

Would require Governor's appointees to vacate office if the successor was not confirmed within 90 days. Currently, an official appointed by the Governor and subject to Senate confirmation may continue in office until the official's successor is appointed or confirmed. The measure could cause an appointed office to be vacant, possibly resulting in some state agencies from issuing orders or conducting other business during the vacancy.

ARGUMENTS FOR

The current process allows prior appointees to continue to serve when the Governor delays naming a replacement, or when the Senate refuses to confirm the name submitted. This means that controversial appointees can continue to serve longer than their specified term.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST

Leaving terms of these executive appointees vacant could leave an agency, board or commission position unfilled and inoperable. In some cases this could lead to the federal government stepping in to make decisions on such things as air quality and water standards. The state constitution is not the place to specify the make up of boards and commissioners, the constitution is about fundamental rights.

THE MEASURE

36

WHAT IT WOULD DO

This measure would increase the minimum hourly wage in three steps from the present level of \$4.75. For calendar year 1997, the wage would be \$5.50, and for calendar year 1998, the wage would be \$6. For calendar year 1999 and the years following, the wage would be \$6.50.

ARGUMENTS FOR

The minimum wage in Oregon has not been increased for five years. The current \$4.75 per hour translates into an income of just over \$800 a month or \$9,880 per year. Many minimum wage workers and their families live below the poverty level and are in need of public assistance. According to Labor Department studies, increasing the minimum wage will reduce the poverty rate, especially in female headed households.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST

The increase to \$6.50 is too steep. It will place Oregon well above the federal level of \$5.15, effective September 1997. The increase will cause job-loss, inflation, or both. Job-loss will start with youth and unskilled workers. Instead of reducing poverty or getting people off welfare, raising the minimum wage will hurt very poor workers and the unemployed who will have to compete for fewer jobs.

SOURCE: The League of Women Voters

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