



Meeting with the press, Gov. Bush dicusses his Social Security package, which includes an option for individual investment.

Bush

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gon voters are evenly split between the two candidates, according to polls.

After the panel discussion, Bush held a press conference in which he was asked if he supported the bill banning physician assisted suicide in Oregon and a bill Smith is sponsoring to increase the availability of DNA evidence. Bush said he supports both bills and did not address any other state issues.

Bush said the intent of the visit was to help solve the question of "how to make sure Social Security fulfills its promise for seniors today and workers tomorrow."

Social Security costs are expected to exceed its income in about 20 to 30 years. Bush's proposal to solve this possible crisis is to allow young workers the choice of remaining with the current Social Security system or investing some of their wages into personal savings accounts, which would supplement their Social Security benefits.

By doing so Bush said he was placing his trust in the American worker, who he believed could make sound financial decisions. He also said the rate of return from private investment would be much greater than the average return of 2 percent from Social Security, which he dismissed as being poor in the current market.

While Bush said he might not have all the answers to the Social Security dilemma, he said it was imperative for the nation to make the first step toward a solution or the only answer left will be "higher income taxes or decreased bene-

fits."

"The government has done a paltry job of investing your money," he said.

Smith said he strongly supported Bush's Social Security plan because he believed making personal investment accounts were in the same spirit of early settlers who traveled west on the Oregon Trail to make their own destiny.

"The spirit of the Oregon Trail is still alive," he said.

Smith advocated the inclusion of prescription benefits in Medicare. He said he felt a drug benefit needed to be added and said Congress was working on a

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George Bush
Texas Governor

solution that could "reduce drug costs and keep people out of hospitals."

Gunderson Inc. employees who participated in the panel discussion about their company's 401(k) investment plan said they were satisfied with the program and therefore supported Bush's plan of personal savings accounts.

Near the end of the panel discussion, Bush played a video of Gore at a Jan. 27, 1999, Social Security round table discussion stating that "returns on equities are just significantly higher" than other returns. Bush said that in the light of these past comments, Gore had "changed his tune" and began to support preserving the current Social Security system.

A subsidiary of Greenbrier Companies based in Lake Oswego,

Gunderson Inc. produces railroad freight cars and marine barges. The company employs 1,300 workers, 70 percent of which invest an average of 8.5 percent of their wages into the company 401(k) plan. Currently, nearly \$30 million has been invested in the plan through a dozen mutual funds. The company also matches employee's contributions to their own retirement plans.

John Halverson, a foreman in the factory and resident of Portland who invests 18 percent of his wages into the 401(k), said he liked the investment plan because he controlled it himself and could pass it along to his children. A self-proclaimed supporter of small government, Halverson said he supported Bush before he came to the factory, and the Texas governor's visit only strengthened that support.

A forklift operator from Scappoose, Clair McGavin, was in the crowd of Gunderson Inc. employees who listened to the panel discussion. He said he enjoyed Bush's visit because he found it to be informative.

"It gave us the thought he really does listen," he said.

Jeff Tanzer, a recruiter for Gunderson Inc., said he liked investing in the company's 401(k) because it gave a high rate of return that was pretty dependable. He also liked being able to take immediate control of his funds.

"It's fun; I can go on-line and make changes overnight," he said.

Before the discussion adjourned, Tanzer said he had one last question, and asked Bush to spell "potato" to which the governor laughingly replied, "and who's the president of Pakistan?"

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