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Religious denomination focal point of Lieberman selection

■ Although both major parties agree Gore made a wise choice, the Jewish candidate is still controversial

By Kristy Hessman
Oregon Daily Emerald

Representatives from both major political parties seem to think that Vice President Al Gore's pick of Connecticut Senator Joseph Lieberman as his running mate makes sense.

"This is very positive and politically very smart," said Jim Edmunson, chairman of the Democratic Party of Oregon. "This is the Gore we have been waiting

"I think it is a wonderful statement of diversity. His religion liberates us to be proud of our religious convictions."

Jim Edmunson
chairman of the
Democratic Party
of Oregon

for. Prior to this, his campaign seemed to lack a spark."

Other democrats say they are pleased with the decision, as well.

"It was a brilliant stroke," said Hart Williams, publicity chair of the Democratic Party of Oregon. "In one day, [George W.] Bush and [Dick] Cheney's train ride completely fell off the national news radar."

A Monday night poll taken by CNN-USA Today-Gallup showed the presidential race is a dead heat, with 45 percent for Bush and 43 percent for Gore, after polls over the weekend showed Bush with a double-digit lead.

"The polls tell the whole sto-

ry," Edmunson said. "The country approves of Joe Lieberman as the next vice president."

Republicans also agree that this was a smart move on Gore's part.

"I think it was a wise, prudent selection," Republican Chair of Lane County Jeff Hoyt said.

Many believe that Lieberman is just what the Democratic Party needs.

"They chose someone with more character," Hoyt said. "It has been pretty well documented that the Democrats have had problems in the past in that area."

"I think they were looking for someone of respectability."

And it seems they have found that trait in Lieberman.

"He is the poster boy for integrity," Edmunson said. "He has been called the conscience of the Senate."

Many say that much of Lieberman's integrity can be traced back to his strong Orthodox Jewish faith.

Lieberman told the Associated Press after Monday's announcement, "My faith is part of me. It's been at the center of who I've been all my life. Without God, I wouldn't be here."

Democrats praise the senator's deep religious ties.

"I think it is a wonderful statement of diversity," Edmunson said. "His religion liberates us to be proud of our religious convictions."

On the other hand, Republicans have their own views on how Lieberman's religion will steer the coming months before the November election.

"I don't think that it will particularly have an impact," Hoyt

The Lieberman file

Al Gore chose Joseph Lieberman to be his running mate. Here are a few facts on the two-term senator.

Lieberman is pro-business, pro-trade, and pro-economic growth. He is equally committed to protecting America's environment and consumers.

Lieberman is a vocal advocate for campaign finance reform.

Lieberman was first elected to the Senate in 1988, scoring a big political upset that year by a margin of just 10,000 votes. Six years later, he won the biggest landslide victory ever in a Connecticut Senate race, drawing 67 percent of the vote and beating his opponent by more than 350,000 votes.

SOURCE: www.senate.gov/~lieberman

said. "Democrats dominate the Jewish vote as it is, but it might actually hurt them in terms of the Muslim vote because there are more Muslims than Jews."

Some wonder if a double standard will take place because of Lieberman's faith.

"I think it will be real interesting to see how the press handles a Jew on the ticket," Hoyt said. "In the past the press has asked Christians if they will be able to set aside their personal views. I think a double standard may develop here."

Edmunson disagreed with that opinion and Lieberman has reiterated the fact that wants to be judged on his experience and his ideas, not his religion.

"So far the religious right wing has dominated," Edmunson said. "Lieberman is moderate and left leaning; I think his religion will balance out many of the religious issues."

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