

# Buchanan, Nader officially excluded from Oct. 3 debate

WASHINGTON — Ralph Nader and Pat Buchanan will not participate in the first presidential debate next week because they failed to meet the criteria for inclusion set by the bipartisan Commission on Presidential Debates, the panel announced Tuesday.

Only Republican George W. Bush and Democrat Al Gore will take part. The first of three 90-minute presidential

debates next month is scheduled for Oct. 3 in Boston.

Candidates seeking to participate must appear on enough state ballots to have a chance of winning a majority of Electoral College votes. They also must have an average of 15 percent support in five major national polls, according to the commission's criteria.

Buchanan, the Reform Party candidate, and Nader, running under the Green Party banner, both have been mired in low single digits in these surveys.

Bush and Gore, meanwhile, drew more than 40 percent support

in the most recent polls.

Nader said "the polls are rigged" because they don't consider non-voters — who are his target audience and a growing majority.

"Fifty-one percent of eligible voters do not vote," Nader said. His campaign is using 800 coordinators nationwide to reach out to college students who have not voted before.

The commission's decision also means Buchanan's and Nader's running mates will be excluded from the 90-minute vice presidential debate scheduled for Oct. 5 in Danville, Ky.

Campaign officials said they

were disappointed, though not surprised by the announcement.

"The real loss here is for the American people," said Nader spokeswoman Laura Jones.

Buchanan spokesman Tim Haley said: "We clearly believe, as the only (third) party that is receiving taxpayer funds, that we ought to be in those debates."

The debate commission said it will reapply the criteria to the candidates before the presidential debates scheduled for Oct. 11 in Winston-Salem, N.C., and Oct. 17 in St. Louis.

Associated Press

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# Senators ask Bush, Gore to follow New York lead on soft money issue

WASHINGTON — The Senate's leading supporters of campaign finance legislation appealed to Al Gore and George W. Bush on Tuesday to follow the lead set in New York's Senate race and ban soft money ads in their battle for the White House.

"In the same spirit that motivated the Lazio-Clinton agreement, we respectfully encourage you to attempt to make a similar agreement in your race," wrote Sens. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Russell Feingold, D-Wis.

"Specifically, we urge you ... to reject any efforts by political parties to use soft money to run independent radio or television advertisements in an attempt to influence your race, and to appeal to independent organizations to refrain from doing the same."

Similar letters were sent to all candidates for the House and Senate.

Bush spokeswoman Mindy Tucker said of the proposal: "We will take it under review."

Gore's campaign noted such a challenge was pending. "Al Gore challenged George Bush months ago to forgo soft money in this campaign and to drop soft-money ads," spokesman Doug Hattaway said.

Rep. Rick Lazio and first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, battling for a Senate seat in New York, reached an agreement over the weekend that would prohibit any political parties endorsing them from airing TV and radio ads boosting them or attacking their opponents. That applies to the Republican and Conservative parties on

Lazio's side and the Democratic, Liberal and Working Families parties on Mrs. Clinton's.

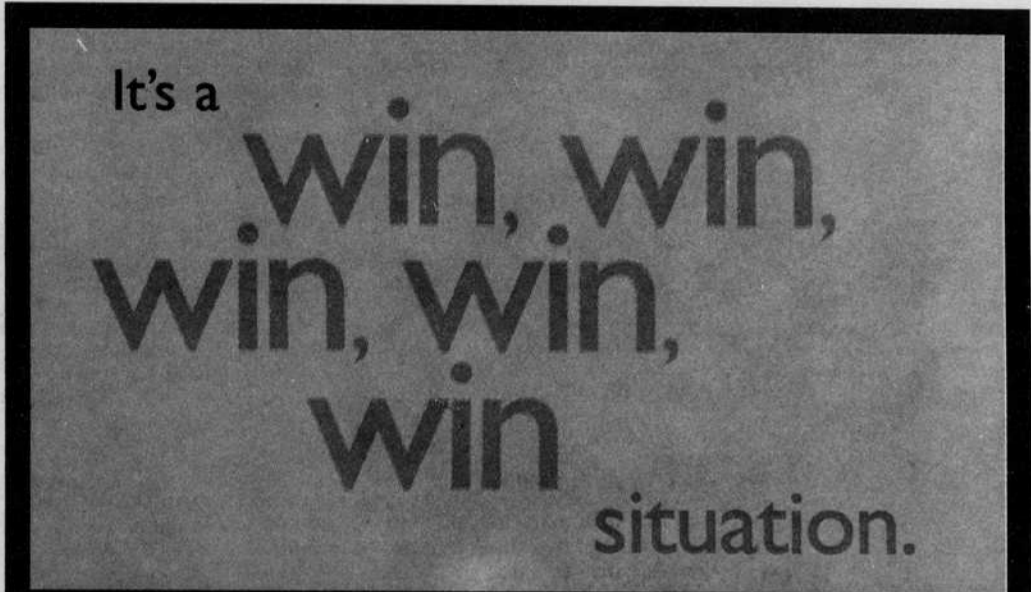
Violations will be punished reciprocally: If one side buys \$100,000 worth of air time, the other side can do the same.

In the presidential race, Bush and Gore are both benefiting from advertisements paid for with soft money — donations made in unlimited amounts. In addition, the parties are spending millions more to help congressional candidates.

"This week, Congressman Rick Lazio and first lady Hillary Clinton voluntarily agreed in their New York Senate race to what we have been advocating for all federal elections: a ban on party soft money broadcast advertising," McCain and Feingold wrote in the letters, this one to Gore. "A ban on soft money — the unregulated, unlimited contributions that flow in increasing amounts into federal elections — represents a major reform in American politics, and we commend Congressman Lazio and Mrs. Clinton for their willingness to limit its use in their race."

"If you are able to reach such an agreement with Governor Bush, we believe that voters will take note of your leadership and react favorably to your support for better, fairer elections. By seizing this opportunity, you will make a positive difference in the way that campaigns are run in this country, and in the way that citizens view their elected representatives."

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